



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

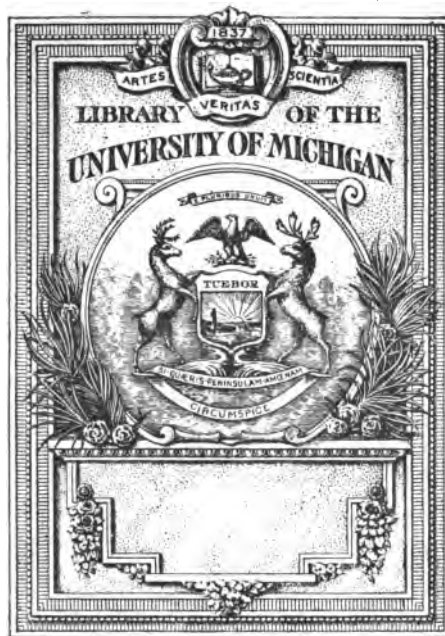
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A 446380

The  
Tragedy and Comedy  
of  
War Hospitals



UH  
465  
G7  
T76



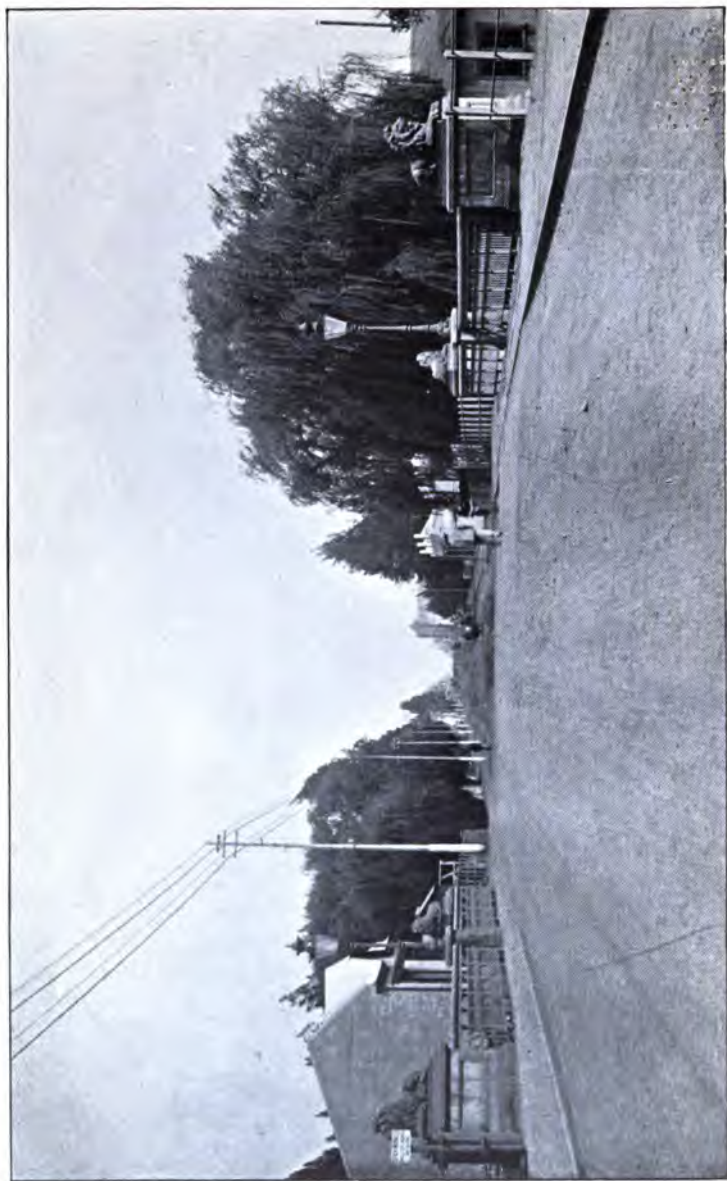
**THE TRAGEDY AND COMEDY  
OF WAR HOSPITALS**



1111  
1111  
1111  
1111

1111  
1111  
1111  
1111





*Photograph Co., Ltd.*

PRETORIA BRIDGE

Frontispiece

# THE TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF WAR HOSPITALS

BY SISTER X.



NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY

1906

70

9-13-21 J.M.

2-7-24

Forbes, M. L.

TO

A. G.

WHOSE WIDE OUTLOOK, AND  
NOBLE SELF-EFFACING ACTIONS,  
IN OUR DAYS OF DIFFICULTY,  
EXERCISED ON ALL AROUND  
HER, AN ELEVATING AND  
INSPIRING INFLUENCE

385351



## PREFACE

THE letters contained in this volume do not propose to give up-to-date Blue-book accounts of events, but simply my own personal experience ; therefore, O ! R.A.M.C. reader, do not rise up in arms against this humble relater ! They were written in the midst of the scenes and occurrences which they describe, to friends at home, and retain their original form, as this affords greater freedom of composition than a series of chapters.

And thou, O ! critic, look not for dates, for I have given none.

These accounts are not meant to reveal the deficiencies of the Royal Army Medical Corps, but only *my own* actual experiences. We all see things differently, but this is how I saw them ! I am not judging, nor am I criticizing, I am merely recording events that occurred within my own range of vision. I received nothing but kindness at the hands of

the R.A.M.C., and can honestly say that, considering how they were hedged round by red tape, it is marvellous what they were able to achieve.

To be chained to a dead system is, in its way, just as unpleasant and insanitary as to live chained to a dead body, and this was practically their position. I can really only liken the system to the Vermiform Appendix, that in all probability would have done admirably in a prehistoric period—when we had tails!—but not in our present state, when we have none. To carry on my simile, one thing that impressed me as odd was, that *all* the victims (viz. officials), although suffering acutely from the inconveniences of appendicitis, were not aware of the fact. They were, I may even say, blissfully unconscious of it; and perhaps, in the circumstances, it was just as well, as summary operations on the spot would have been more than disastrous and quite out of the question!

Such operations have taken place since the War, and great reforms are in progress in the R.A.M.C.; so that if I have laid some emphasis on their shortcomings, it is not with the intention to “show them up,” but to point out that the disease from which

## PREFACE

ix

their system suffered was out-of-dateness, and not indifference or carelessness.

I hope it is unnecessary for me to assert that these accounts are perfectly true, and not imaginings of my brain. Would that some of them were!

SISTER X.



100

100

100

## CONTENTS

### LETTER I

	PAGE
"Locally engaged" by R.A.M.C.—Our first difficulties over feeding and sleeping accommodation—Intricacies of army nursing to civilians—Where does the Nursing Sister come in?—Futility of flinging oneself against brick walls in the forms of "Orders"—The invasion of bugs—"Fatigue party's" onslaught to remove these unwelcome and unexpected foes—The sour milk campaign: fierce and prolonged struggles to procure fresh—A probable "connoisseur" on beer, but not on milk—Indiscriminate ward masters and orderlies—A very confusing parade of officials to uninitiates—Kindness of Maritzburg ladies . . . . .	I

### LETTER II

Mrs. G. joins our hospital—First introductions to night duty—Hunt for the night orderly just "posted"—Patients terrorized by ignorant orderlies—Brutalizing effect of pay day and *some* revelations pertaining thereto—"Feet inspection," and its discredit in the eyes of civilian nurses—The orderlies' mode of ward work—Scene over dirty milk bowls, and efforts to get them washed—Dressing the wounded in tents, and some of the conversations amongst the men—An heroic Australian—

Shortness of ward linen—Scarcity of everything—Inconveniences of parade—How the wounded arrive down from the front—Name-taking before any treatment—Between two stools : dirty sheets or damp ones . . . . .	PAGE 22
--	------------

## LETTER III

Journey to Mooi River—A fierce struggle for a bed—Successful tactics after some manœuvring—Our introductions to No. 4 Hospital—Plunged on night duty immediately on arrival—Night duty in torrents of rain with no “bump of locality”—Distressing cases of hæmorrhage and paralysis—The entire loss of speech and its distressing consequences—An uncomplaining Boer patient—The glories of a South African sunrise	47
---	----

## LETTER IV

Sent to Ladysmith at a moment's notice—An invitation to breakfast at Colenso—A disappointing guide—Crossing the Tugela on a foot-bridge—An account of an officer's reception at Intombi Hospital during the siege—Our arrival in Ladysmith—We take over our wards—Our horror at the terrible condition of men and wards—No comforts of any sort—The men's bravery—Nothing but flies—The men's appreciation of a “petticoat” and its homeliness—A distracting orderly with creaking boots and “formed” ideas on nursing—Goods sent up to us by Mrs. G.—An amusing patient—The patients' eagerness for clean handkerchiefs—The starved men turn against tinned milk—An obstreperous patient—An amusing episode with a General—A tremendous hailstorm—Amusing encounters with officers' friends—A beautiful death . . . . .	69
--	----

## CONTENTS

xiii

### LETTER V

	PAGE
The 11 Field Hospital to move off, and our regret—Scenes in the ward when the officers are leaving for home—Colonel P. secures a plum cake—Attempts to resecure a red quilt given to me in a weak moment by a weak officer—Mr. and Mrs. G.'s Convalescent Home—Interview at the P.M.O.'s office—Re-installed under the R.A.M.C. again—Filthy state of wards, and demoralization of the Intombi Hospital orderlies—Utter neglect of patients—Excess of stimulants—Orderlies' ideas of washing—A tussle to keep a clean ward, with no success—Arrival of nurses from England—Send in resignation on receiving a wire from Sister G.—An encounter with a guard on the train—Only a waiting-room to sleep in on arriving at Maritzburg . . . . .	103

### LETTER VI

Journey to Bloemfontein—Train stopped three times for my benefit by a gallant R.S.O.—Attached to No. 10 General Hospital—Exploring farms—Difficulties in passing sentries—A disastrous drive to Quin's farm . . . . .	132
---	-----

### LETTER VII

Train journey to Pretoria—A filthy compartment with no sleeping accommodation—Bundled in pell-mell with officers for three days—Some accounts of its inconveniences—Attached to Irish Hospital on arriving at Pretoria—Bad sleeping accommodation—Successful efforts to procure better—Good organization of the Irish Hospital—The orderly and the duster versus Lord Roberts' visit to hospital—Why the men get such bad	
---	--

	PAGE
relapses—Dishonesty of the men amongst themselves—	
Accounts of the staff's "messaging" arrangements—An un-	
fortunate ride—Drive to Irene—A cheeky native—Contact	
with an Exeter Hall-ite—The over-payment of natives by	
the Government, and its results—Annexation of the Transvaal	
—An "irreconcilable" in the form of a Boer woman—Journey	
to Cape Town with Boer prisoners, and the line blown up—	
Reach Cape Town after a week and go aboard the "Orotava"	148

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PRETORIA BRIDGE . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	TO FACE PAGE
A DOCTOR STRUGGLING WITH DIET-SHEETS . . . . .	16
A VIEW OF THE WILLOW TREES IN MARITZBURG PARK, NEAR THE COLLEGE HOSPITAL . . . . .	48
TUGELA RIVER, OVER WHICH WE CROSSED ON OUR WAY TO LADYSMITH, SHOWING TERMINATION OF RAILWAY LINE . . . . .	80
BLOEMFONTEIN . . . . .	144
THE PALACE OF JUSTICE AT PRETORIA (THE IRISH HOSPITAL) . . . . .	148
EMBARKING FOR HOME. THE LAST TO GO IN . . . . .	176
HOMeward BOUND! . . . . .	184



# THE TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF WAR HOSPITALS

## LETTER I

COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG,  
NATAL, *December.*

DEAR R.,

As I promised to write and tell you my experiences, I expect you have been wondering why I haven't done so sooner. I left Cape Town in November, and came round here to stay with Mrs. S. After waiting only four days, owing to her kind introduction to the P.M.O.,\* my services were accepted by the R.A.M.C.† My delight was unbounded on receiving a blue-papered official note telling me to present myself at Fort Napier Camp Hospital, which, needless to say, I did, and after a brief interview with the P.M.O. I was handed over to an Army Sister who didn't seem to know quite what to do with me.

\* Principal Medical Officer.    † Royal Army Medical Corps.



## **2 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG**

Instead of being taken to the ward as I expected, to my surprise she informed me that if I wanted something to sleep on we must hunt for mattresses. She showed me the Hut I was to occupy, which, being a novelty, greatly pleased me, and after a search for that desirable article, a mattress, which was duly found, we staggered with it under a tropical sun, and deposited it on the bedstead. The second difficulty was our food. There seemed some hitch about the feeding of the "inner man," owing to the fact that I, with three others, were "foreign bodies" to the R.A.M.C., and came under the heading of "locally engaged," which, though sounding humble, may yet boast of higher lineage than "Unemployed," which was my unhappy condition before my services were accepted. The difficulty of feeding us, however, was met by the kind superintendent of a school, who stepped in and offered to feed us at 10s. per week per head. To my continued chagrin, the Army Sister offered to conduct me there, and it was at this juncture that I came across the three other "foreign bodies" of the same "species" as myself. The Army Sister, who seemed to think them a consoling element in the

situation, said we were all to work together at the College Hospital.

The meeting took place over a very unappetizing table. I felt only conscious of flies and natives, who were gaily sweeping the floor in another portion of the room, and adding to clouds of dust their ceaseless chatter, which was deafening and went on quite regardless of our presence, which rather amazed me. Sister W., the superintendent whom I was to work under, received me very nicely, and, after a scratch meal, we all proposed walking down to our hospital, to see what there was to do. We were informed that it would be handed over to us by an Army Sister who was temporarily in charge there. In spite of the heat, which was intense, hot waves rising up from the ground and scorching our faces, the road to the College was certainly very pretty. As we walked down a steep hill we saw a red building lying in the distance, which was pointed out to me as our goal. At the foot of the hill we crossed a small bridge under which ran a narrow winding river, its banks being completely draped with the most marvellous willow trees I have ever seen, not like our short stumpy ones, but with long

#### 4 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

graceful flowing boughs streaming into the very water itself, whilst all the growths round about were equally luxurious. At night these banks are lit up with little glow-worms, which present an enthralling sight, like the pictures of fairyland in the imagination of one's childhood. How far away childhood seems now! We are grinding instead "amongst the iron facts of life, and have no time for self-deception." On reaching the building, which stood in very nice grounds, we toiled up some lead-lined stairs and presented ourselves to the Army Sister. There was another (a Reserve) whom I recognized as having travelled round from Cape Town on the "Carisbrook" with me. She, like myself, was new to it all, but as she had had some days in advance of me, I put her through a course of "pumping," which she took most amiably. She offered to take me round, saying as we went along, "You are to have my wards, but there is *nothing* to do." This confession amazed me. "Surely if you have patients, there *must* be *something* to do," I remarked. Visions of civilian hospitals and all the work there was to do in them naturally sprang before my mind, but

the Reserve Sister, seeing my astonishment, smiled leniently, and said with a twinkle in her quiet eye, "This is army nursing, you know; it is quite different from civilian." "How?" I kept asking her, feeling somewhat puzzled. "You see," she explained, "the orderlies do everything." "The *orderlies*!" I exclaimed. "Oh yes," she said resignedly, "they do everything—make the beds, wash the patients, and give them their meals; and the Sister is not supposed to stop in the ward after she has taken the temperatures and given the medicines. It is one of the rules." "What do we do, then?" I said. All my dreams were vanishing. "Oh! that's just it," said the little Sister, "that's what I can't make out; I wish we could do more. Out of desperation to-day I began to wash a man as he looked so uncomfortable, but Sister came in and was quite horrified. She called me away, explaining it wasn't my work to do that, but the orderlies'. They didn't do it, however," she added simply, "because the man was very dirty." We entered the wards together, where a few men were lying looking very forlorn, and to all intents and purposes seemed left entirely in the hands of the orderlies. There were not many

## 6 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

cases, and most of them were down with rheumatism. There was a case of peritonitis, that looked very serious, and as she explained each case, she ended by saying that they were all being sent to Durban next day. "Not this man with peritonitis!" I exclaimed. "Oh, yes," she replied, "they are all going— isn't it odd?" giving me an expressive look. It certainly struck me as such, and feeling somewhat entangled I resorted to silence. The wards had, of course, no appearance of comfort, but under the circumstances this was not to be expected, as it was not yet properly equipped. After leaving the wards the little Sister began explaining how very tiresome the orderlies were, and how impossible it was to get anything done, as we, in our civil hospital, had been accustomed to have them done as a matter of routine. "But," she added, "you will find out for yourself." And didn't I just! The Army Sister also gave me a few hints as to what I was *not* to do—I was *not* to wash the patients, and was *not* to make their beds. I had *nothing to do* with their diet (except seeing they got their food); nor was the responsibility of having my wards clean even within my province. "Really, how odd!" I kept saying. "Not a bit like

## EXPLANATIONS ABOUT ARMY NURSING 7

civilian nursing," etc. But she went on: "If the orderlies refuse to obey your instructions, you can report them"—(I had not the least idea to whom!)—"and," she continued, rather pompously, "you must make them do their work and not do it for them." Thus she left me. We further learnt that no one was expected to remain on night duty, and with many qualms and misgivings we left the building to the tender mercies of the sleeping orderlies. For some nights we had to console ourselves with the thought that the arrangement was only temporary. Next day I returned and found the temperature of the peritonitis patient still 101°; but there he was with the others, preparing to depart, looking very exhausted, and struggling to roll up his kit. I ordered him back to bed, and sought for the orderly. He was about the only person I knew then, but he was almost undistinguishable from the patients in their khaki clothes, more especially as he was sitting amongst a group of men ready to go, and to my amazement (after being pointed out to me) was actually smoking with them. I called him, and suggested he should be helping the sick men roll up their clothes. He looked

## 8 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

over his shoulder, answering carelessly, "I'll see to it, Sister."

After waiting to see he did, he eventually strolled up, with many glances and grins at the men. I asked him if there had not been a mistake about the peritonitis case, and he answered in the negative, saying in an unmoved voice, "They 'ave all got to go." My blood fairly boiled. I did not have time to realize that it was not really hard-heartedness on the orderly's part. He was a mere tool, and, if he *had* any feelings, was quite helpless to follow their promptings; besides, the removal of patients had nothing to do with him. However, moved by my protests, he eventually said he'd go for the ward master.

"Who is the ward master," I said (not then knowing), "and what has he to do with it?"

"'E's in charge of the ward," grinned the orderly, somewhat amused at my ignorance. This hurt my dignity, and I took measures to inform him in my innocence that I was! I was beginning to feel somewhat entangled, and a little doubtful as to my real position in this mazy predicament; but I determined to see it out and not betray my fears before him.

## FIRST INTRODUCTIONS TO RED TAPE 9

After at least half an hour the ward master appeared, I meanwhile having made the peritonitis patient as comfortable as circumstances would permit with dirty sheets and flat hard pillows. He was not used to such attentions, and all the men stared at my making his bed. He confessed, to my inquiries, having had the sheets pulled straight, "They" (meaning the orderlies) "never make beds like you have," he said.

I was soon recalled by the ward master's appearance, who came in with a book, gave a glance at me, and then turned to the orderly and said sharply, "Come on, now—'urry up there—parade in 'alf an hour! Why ain't this man up? Get his things together, and look sharp!"

For a moment I felt I was watching a play, and was too amazed to speak. As he was moving off my presence of mind returned. "I sent for you," I said, "because I wish to tell you this man is much too ill to go. *I* will not allow him to get up."

He looked at me for a moment to see if I were in my right senses, and then said, quite politely, "Those are my orders, Sister; he has to go with the rest." I told him it would kill the man. "Can't



## 10 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

help it, Sister—they's my orders, you see." He spoke in a kindlier tone, because I suppose he saw how horrified I was, and he was, after all, only another tool! I was determined, if I could, to save this man, but I was merely hurling myself against a brick wall. Neither the Sister Superintendent nor the doctor (who was officer on duty) were able to prevent it.

The "order" had gone forth, and *go* he had to. It was better he should die, apparently, than that the "order" should be infringed! We were all helpless, and the civilian doctor had practically no more power on this occasion to prevent his patients being sent off than my humble self.

Even the Sister Superintendent is a mere non-entity, and is treated with no more respect than our humble selves.

I really cried when I saw all these poor men hustled downstairs to sit in the hot quadrangle till the ambulance arrived. They all sat on the ground, looking very resigned (quite characteristic of them) and my poor peritonitis looking pale and exhausted. I made one last effort to get him some brandy, but was told there was none "drawn," so I had to

accept my defeat with as much grace and temper as I had left. All the other three Sisters looked red, limp, and exhausted when I went into the mess-room, suggestive also of scrimmages, and we further exhausted ourselves in venting our indignation on the R.A.M.C. system in very uncomplimentary language.

"They say a Government has no body to be kicked or soul to be damned," so if we had been wise we might have saved this energy, instead of expending it, as we did, on the walls. Thus ended Fight 1, with defeat!

Fight 2 seemed even worse, because, combined with other difficulties, we found the wards infested with bugs! They were literally crawling on the walls, and massed in regular "coveys" on the beds. One man informed me that he had caught fifty during the night, and to prove his point he had laid out their corpses in neat rows on a sheet of white paper; while another man in one of the other wards, with his legs in splints, had endured their "night assault" in agonies. When the doctor reluctantly removed the splints (owing to the victim's entreaties), there were these horrid creatures in a

## 12 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

single and double file all down his leg. As there was then no night Sister on duty he had to endure it, but he said he would rather have been on the field under fire.

These facts being brought again and again to the ear of the authorities, stronger measures at last were resorted to than that of the old S.M.O.'s,\* which had consisted of greasing the bed with some sort of fatty stuff that dripped (*when the sun rose*) on to the floor, making a horrible mess. Oh, our agonies, our despair!

However, at last, hearing drastic measures were to be taken—a “fatigue party” was to be put on to pull all the beds to pieces and scrub the floors and syringe the walls with paraffin (another mixture!)—our hopes revived. This was an amusing sight; but owing to our faith being somewhat shaken with the methods we saw so constantly being resorted to (unsuccessfully), we congregated to see the performance, holding up our skirts, and looking well around to see that no “visitors” were crawling on us. They had no compunction even in dropping off the ceilings, I mean the bugs, of course, not the

\* Senior Medical Officer.

"fatigue party," on whom our curiosity was now centred. We had not the faintest notion then what a "fatigue party" was. They arrived in a body and clattered up the lead-lined stairs with their hob-nailed boots, splashing the water about most recklessly in big pools which trickled through the banisters into the hall, all airing their views with the utmost freedom. "Nice job this!" said one, rolling up his sleeve and sitting on the edge of a bed that had not yet been taken down. "Yes," said his companion. "Didn't know this was 'active service.'" This piece of satire gave vent to much laughter; and then one picked up a broom, swept a patch, and then began to scrub it, then swept another patch, and began to scrub that; and another lighted his pipe and sat lost in thought, and so on. They had no notion really how to start cleaning up. We all took turns at squirting the lotion down the wainscoting and various crevices, even the doctors assisting in this course of "charing," while the "fatigue party" were leaning on their scrubbing brushes, cracking their little jokes, and having a puff from their pipes that issued frequently from their pockets. They also retired from the "scenes"

#### 14 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

at various intervals, their absence ranging from half an hour to two. It did not matter to *them* when the work was done. They had always very plausible excuses, and so it was useless asking why or where they were going, or why the ward was not finished at the end of the day. After many affrays, and much swearing from the ward master and sergeant-major, the cleansing was done after a style, and gradually these dreadful creatures disappeared, thus ending Fight 2, with partial success!

Then we have daily skirmishes about the milk, which help to reduce our patience considerably. The scene of action occurs generally outside the ward, and I will relate Fight 3 as I go on. The S.M.O. is an Old Reserve, and acts as if he had been put away for years. The difficulty in getting fresh milk for the dysentery and enteric cases seemed insuperable. One day we happened to have a surplus, owing to a kind person having sent us a present of some. The S.M.O.'s idea, directly it came, was to have it served out by the pint, and he went into one of the Sister's wards and told her a quantity of fresh milk had been sent, and that the patients had better drink it up *at*

*once*, whilst it was *fresh*, quite regardless as to whether the patients had just had a "feed," or were in a fit condition to consume it. The *point*, or its "central gravity," with him was that the milk *had come*, and "Tommy" must drink it at any cost to prevent its going sour! This was constantly happening, producing endless tussles to procure more. The R.A.M.C. method is to pour a pint of milk *three times a day* into each patient's bowl that is by his side, and he may drink it or not at pleasure. If it turns, or is sour when issued, that is not the *point*, and doesn't concern any one but the patient. He has to drink it or leave it. *It has been issued*—its fitness for drinking purposes being a mere side issue—and no further responsibility rests on the transmitters, the "receivers" only having to suffer. This may answer admirably with men who have nothing the matter with them, and "fall sick" merely to elude their work, but for enteric or dysentery cases it is nothing short of disastrous. It is not surprising the milk is sour, as the pails get a very scant (if any) scalding out, Mr. Orderly having no qualms whatever in tipping pints of much-valued and greatly-in-demand fresh milk into

## 16 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

cans from which sour milk has just been ejected, and carrying them round to the bedside basins (also unwashed), thus jauntily disposing of it. Can't you imagine how exasperating it is for us? The milk is kept under lock and key by the corporal, and we are *politely* told—or rudely, according to the temperament of the individual—that “*it is nothing to do with us.*”

We stand outside and troop up to this door, with agitated countenances and raging breasts, demanding it for special patients. Another trick that caused great annoyance to us was that when the new lot of fresh milk arrived it was put into a sort of “stove” place next to the kitchen, to be issued out next morning as fresh. No wonder we had numerous complaints that it was sour! “I can't drink this milk, Sister,” says a long-suffering patient, “it's quite sour.” “Orderly, why is this milk sour?” “Can't be sour,” he replies, “just this minute poured in.” “Don't you know when milk is sour?” I said hopelessly one day. “It's nothing to do with me, Sister,” said my noble helper, “that's what the corporal gave me to give round; you had better make yer complaints to the

## ENCOUNTER WITH THE WARD MASTER 17

ward master, if yer 'ave any." Open skirmish follows!

Scene I. (Ward Master *versus* Sister): "This milk is sour," I said, opening fire at once, "and none of the patients can drink it."

Ward Master: "There is no other, so they must."

Sister (with mental visions of the poor dysentery cases): "Will you taste it yourself and see?" Ward Master (smelling cautiously, and keeping his moustache well at bay): "Don't think there is much the matter with it myself." Sister (persisting, and edging the bowl nearer to *the* moustache): "Taste it." "Smelling does me, thank you, Sister," replied this responsible individual, edging away. "I can see you are not much of a judge of milk," I said on this occasion, hurling my last shot at him over this much-mooted point. "This milk isn't sour," he said. "Well," I replied, "I think I am a better judge of milk than you are, as I dare say you are a better judge of *beer* than I should be, and I should not dream of disputing *your* opinion on that point, and I really must ask you *not* to dispute mine on this!" Not till further threatening to report the matter to the S.M.O. unless fresh milk was pro-



## 18 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

cured, did my fiery protests make the slightest impression. If they only acted more intelligently! But what can you expect from men who have their very gloves put into their hands and who are not allowed to *think* but only obey!

Sister W. (the superintendent), who runs a ward here in addition to looking after the whole hospital, finds exactly the same difficulties; in fact, she was informed by her orderly, on entering the ward one day at 8 a.m., that she was too early, and 8.30 was the regulation hour! However, having forty-six beds and only two thermometers to take all the temperatures with, she thought a half-hour would materially assist her, so did not retire. She also suggested that the wards should be dusted, but was told by her "up-to-date-in-the-Blue-book" orderly that that was not her business, but the ward master's.

On another occasion she found a bad case of hers (suffering from appendicitis) sweeping, if you please! "What are you doing?" she said in great alarm to the poor patient. "Oh," he said, "we all have to sweep under and around our beds, and I was told by the orderly to do mine." Sister W. ordered him back to bed at once, but he said, "I

WHERE DO THE SISTERS COME IN? 19

must sweep first, as if I don't I shall only be made a prisoner when I am better for disobeying an order." The orderly was sent for, but declared that he was quite within *his* rights in making the man get up. "Nothing marked on 'is board to the contrary," he said stolidly. The civilian doctor had unfortunately omitted to put "bed down" on his board, about which more anon. We were then sublimely ignorant about the staff, which gradually met us in the shape of capital letters, and runs thus—(for future reference)—P.M.O., S.M.O., M.O., Sergeant-Major, Sergeant, Corporal, Lance-Corporal, 1st Class, 2nd Class, and 3rd Class Orderlies. They were a goodly heritage to tackle, and I am sure they will pardon the utter despair they all *at first* filled us with, presenting themselves to our bewildered brains only as mere stumbling-blocks! Later on we met some of the staff in the form of the S.M.O., etc. and the M.O.'s, translated, Senior Medical Officer and Medical Officers. Going round with the doctors produced great revelations. Whispered undertones went on between him and the orderly about matters that we had been always accustomed to attend to, and we began to wonder

## **20 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG**

why we were there at all. Things of the greatest importance, that require skilled hands, were in the hands of young ignorant orderlies. We were aghast, but not consulted. We live in a state of shocks. Our patients are removed at the will of the S.M.O., who comes round, probably when we are not there, and orders so many to go "down" or "up," as the case may be, by a certain train, and off they are whisked! It is not an uncommon occurrence on entering our wards in the morning to find them literally strewn with men's clothes, trousers, coats, braces, belts, blankets, mackintoshes, tins, boots, rifles, helmets, in a scattered heap, and a lot of weary, dejected-looking individuals sitting on the edge of their beds in crumpled khaki, with their tobacco pipes and little personal odds and ends being stuffed into holland bags or haversacks.

The doctors, who are civilians like ourselves, do not suffer to the same extent as we do, but they complain at the long diet sheets which have to be filled up every day. The diets then come under the ward master, and never come into our province at all! Isn't it too extraordinary? We keep asking each other, "Where do we come in?"

There are rumours that another S.M.O. is coming here, so perhaps he will alter things. I must say people are very kind here, and all are willing to help in any way they can. We get fruit, milk, and eggs sent to us for the troops, who enjoy it very much. Mrs. S. comes often, also Mrs. C. E., and we do not find the ladies at all in the way; but then there are a very nice lot round here all anxious to do what they can to *help* but not *interfere*, which makes the distinction.

At present we are still short of everything, such as sheets, pillow-cases, towels, shirts, etc., but they are gradually coming in. The P.M.O.'s wife works as hard as any of the authorities, getting things for the hospital. She is splendid, and a most charming woman. Still, one can't help thinking that a reserve of beds, mattresses, sheets, pillows, etc., are as essentially necessary to the R.A.M.C. as guns, ammunition, and men to the other part of the "Service"!

Yours affectionately,

X.

## LETTER II

COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG,  
NATAL, *January and February, 1900.*

DEAR R.,

We have been so busy since the Colenso and Spion Kop disasters that I have barely had time to write, and this letter has been written in snatches, so if it is disjointed you will know why. We are all deeply interested in the work, as none could fail to be. Mrs. G. (daughter of Lord P.) has joined us, and comes down here every morning at 9 a.m. and works for twelve solid hours. It is beyond praise. She gives up her whole time, and simply loves it. She and her husband do so much good, and help wherever they can. Anything that is needed which the Government aren't supplying, and perhaps couldn't be expected to, they step in and supply. We are all very glad to have her here, as, combined with being a very charming woman, she is of the greatest assistance, and is working here from 9 a.m. till 10 p.m.

## THE REVELATIONS OF NIGHT DUTY 23

The new S.M.O. has come and brought great changes for the better. He is an R.A.M.C., and the men pay more attention to him than they did to the old "reserve officer." He works very hard to procure things for the hospital. It is quite a treat working for him, and it makes it easier to put up with the hosts of difficulties we still have to contend with. Men are no good as nurses, any more, I suppose, than men would find women as soldiers!

I have been on night duty, which is a still further revelation into army nursing. A "general post" takes place; the orderlies are two hours on and four off, so we are presented with relays all night. We can't see the wisdom of it, as they sleep just the same, and rarely hand down the orders they get to their successor. We enter the wards to see, perhaps, a "special" bad enteric case sitting up, or the dysenteries out of bed, thus undoing all the care during the day. My first experience on night duty was somewhat instructive. I found the "relief orderlies" lying about on the ground in the hall, over which I had to pick my way. A corporal was on duty to "post" them, but he also slept. I was proceeding into one of the big wards where there

## 24 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

were many serious cases, and though all the patients were quiet I could not find the orderly. I waited about, but as he did not turn up I went for the ward master, who sprang up, declaring that he must be there, as he (the sleeping ward master) had "just posted 'im!" I suggested he had better be found, so he followed me down to the wards (which was a sort of chapel off the rest of the building) and stood looking mystified.

"'E must be in 'ere somewhere, Sister; I posted 'im myself a few minutes ago." "I am sure he is not," I said positively, having walked as usual round the entire ward with my lantern and peered into each bed. I did not know that one patient had been removed, but the ward master did, I suppose, and having, moreover, strong suspicions (knowing the agonizing temptation of an empty bed to any of his comrades), he began to move slowly round, peering into each one, and there, sure enough, in a secluded corner, well tucked under the counterpane, lay peacefully slumbering the "two-hourly relief orderly." He looked such a mere boy, and I am sure both the ward master and myself thought he was having the best of it. I begged the irate

corporal not to punish him, and to leave me to awaken him. He was, however, a man of humour, and having only just been caught "napping" himself, felt charitably disposed. "Must frighten 'im," he said; "I won't punish 'im, Sister. 'Ere" (seizing the culprit), "what are you doing, sleeping on duty?" An impatient shake from the slumberer, with murmurs, "Can't yer leave a fellow alone?" He then turned over and continued his repose on the bosom of Morpheus still more profoundly, after digging his head comfortably into the pillow and well under the blanket. After violent shakes, and the aid of my glaring lantern full on his face, he stood on his feet, rubbing his eyes and pulling at his belt, saying indignantly, "Wasn't asleep," in reply to his accuser; "only laid down *just* this minute; they were all asleep, so I saw no 'arm."

He thoroughly believed he had not been asleep, poor fellow, and after many threats from the ward master on the punishments meted out for neglect of duty, we left him sitting disconsolately at the table under the lamp, reading "The Wide Awake"! What irony! Poor boy! my consolation was that he had not much longer on duty. Fancy the utter



## 26 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

bewilderment of being thrust into a big ward of nearly forty beds to any one even practised, and imagine what it must be to these poor young soldiers, taken from their regiments, some of them only mere recruits, just out of England. There are not enough R.A.M.C. men, so it cannot be helped ; and on the whole we prefer the raw recruits to the former, whose professional ideas of nursing are of about as much use as the untrained notions of the recruits, which is not saying much ! We cannot impress upon any of these men the importance of seeing that the enterics and dysenteries do not sit up, or get out of bed, or eat. We find them eating bread that has been begged off a fellow-patient, or even been given by an orderly. "Why do you allow it ?" we say to the orderly, probably to one quite fresh posted, who has received no orders. "Didn't know anything about it, Sister ; 'ad no orders" ; or, if he had, "Couldn't help it," he answers aggrievedly ; "can't 'ave my eyes all ways." These orderlies start with no training, so what can we expect ? He thinks it quite superfluous, as I said before, to make a bed or to wash the feeding cups, and would not dream of doing either if left to

himself. They put down these idiosyncrasies to our civilian origin. An R.A.M.C. orderly told me it was not "army system," and as long as a man was able to make his own bed he was obliged to, and what was more, he'd see he did—sometimes with disastrous results!

A case in point was about a patient who had very high fever, and the Sister, knowing the orderlies' propensities, gave strict injunctions that the man was not to sit up in bed, much less get out, and also wrote it down in the order book. Next morning the orderly, seeing the man made no attempt to move, came up and said, "Come on, now, get up and make yer bed." The patient refusing, the orderly tried sneering. "Oh, none of your 'gymes'; can't get round me. I wish I could 'fall sick.' 'Urry up, or I'll have the corporal in." As the man remained obdurate, the threat was carried out, and the corporal was produced to maintain the moral discipline of the ward, and the patient was actually threatened that if he did not comply with the orderly's instructions, he would be made a prisoner on recovery! By such drastic measures he was accordingly prevailed on, and needless to add, he

## 28 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

became much worse, probably *more* due to his being in the midst of a very bad attack of enteric, which bed-making did not tend to improve. The origin of all this was, that "down" had not been written on his bed board. "Bed down" means that the patient can lie down or remain in bed. "Up" means that he has to get up, and that involves making his bed. "Bed up" means that his bed must be rolled up in the daytime, so that he cannot lie down on it!

However, to return after all these explanations, this orderly was reported on this occasion to the S.M.O. and got "C.B." (confined to barracks). "Falling sick" is another term the soldiers have; it is one of their ways of getting out of work, so it takes a lot to convince the orderlies that men are not resorting to this method, which apparently is of a very frequent occurrence amongst them in peace time! The unfortunate part of their being "behind the scenes," as it were, makes them so suspicious, that when the men are really sick they don't get the credit for it.

Another of their days of note is "Pay Day." I was still on night duty when this day came round. I learnt that Pay Day was a day of thirst riots!

"Getting drunk," they call it. So I listened to what the other Sisters had to say on the subject, feeling rather creepy, nevertheless, with the night to go through. There had been regular brawls, even open fights, and one orderly (not a favourite with us) had nearly had his eye knocked out.

Meanwhile, another had tried to remove a splint off the shattered arm of one of the patients, thinking he was doing him a good turn. "All right, old chappie, won't 'urt you more than I can 'elp!" he had spluttered out over the unfortunate individual, who being on his back, and in the act of going to sleep, was trying to struggle up. After measuring his length over the patient's arm, he was dragged off by the afflicted Sister, and conveyed by two *fairly* sober orderlies outside the ward and deposited on the ground, where I found him slumbering on his face, with his elbows over his head—quite a characteristic attitude, I discover. They are typical, even when asleep. I found several more lying in different corners, the moon inconsiderately revealing them, as it came shining down over the quadrangle, lighting up many sad sights. The peaceful effect of the moon was in strange contrast to this melancholy

### 30 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

spectacle of humanity. As I was meditating "Only man is vile" the night orderly joined me, and seeing me in full view of the situation thought some apologies were necessary! "Bad job this, Sister?" "Very," I said drily. "The guard-room is full," he went on explaining, "so I had to leave 'em where they were."

"Where they fell," I said suggestively. An apologetic laugh issued after this remark. I asked, from bare curiosity, if this often happened. "Well," he said, unwillingly (anxious to save my feelings, I think), "we have to make a shift on Pay Day, and always allow for a certain number, but it's extra bad this time. Pity," he said meditatively, "as many of them are married men, and their wives will have to suffer."

I passed on. We cannot sin unto ourselves is true enough, but in this case, the patients had to suffer too, as well as the poor wives at home!

The ward master and I had a busy night, and wretched men who had been up all day had to be routed out and put on duty to fill up "gaps," so we had to shut our eyes to many "forty winks" as we came round. It is an odd thing, that in emergencies

they will never grumble. "I expect you are tired," I said to one orderly. "Well, yes, Sister, but we must put up with these things," he said cheerfully. "Pay Day is a bad day in the army amongst some of these fellers." Another "day" is "Feet inspection," which comes round with great pomp and a retinue of medical staff sergeants, corporals, and orderlies, who all stand attention staring into vacancy, and rows of naked feet exposed, with all the bedclothes turned back for this purpose. It seems great waste of time at present. It is a pity civilian hospital lines, which are admittedly good, are not more followed, and that the cleanliness of the ward and patients does not rest in the hands of the Sister in charge. All these days come as shocks to us, as they seem such utter nonsense in these grim times! I stood open-mouthed when I first saw the performance!

Before ending this letter I am going to give a description of the morning work, and how it is done. Being night Sister, I thought it my duty to supervise the bed-making and the sweeping of the wards, as the day Sisters complained it was so badly done, but it was not long before I was in-

## 32 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

formed that this wasn't my business. After "Parade" the orderlies all come into the wards, and instead of working I found them sitting down on the different beds and talking! The greatest chaos prevailed. One orderly, in putting a bed straight, swept the top clothes on the filthy floor; another began sweeping; while a third was lighting a cigarette. I discovered they changed about in these processes, and that when one was tired of straightening the beds, he took to the broom, and vice versa, and the "cigarette" orderly was exchanged with the most frequently of the lot.

On my suggesting a chair for the bedclothes I was met with great opposition, the orderly airily remarking that the floor did him very well. The sweeping was quite on a par with the bed-making. They apparently did not seem to think it mattered where they began, their ideas being of the haziest, using their broom more frequently as a leaning-post, and shouting any remarks they had to make to a patient, near or afar. It was a perfect bedlam in consequence. After a few flourishes the broom again changed hands, and was handed to another orderly (making a bed, by the way) in aggrieved

tones. "You might take a 'and at this; I 'ave 'ad enough of this 'ere job," and having successfully disposed of the broom, giving a grin and a wink down the ward, he too disappeared from the scene of action. His successor, nothing loath (being also sick of his job), took to the change kindly, and began sweeping under the bed nearest him, not where the other had left off (the middle of the ward having been already partially done). The next time I saw the broom, when my duties allowed me time to follow it, it was in the possession of a one-armed patient, who had had this unpopular "job" handed over to him, No. 2 orderly having joined the ranks of the cigarette brigade outside. I was not surprised that, under the conditions, the ward was neither swept nor cleaned, and the Sisters entered their wards to find them unfinished.

To finish my burlesque was when the orderly came staggering in on the top of all this chaos (with the other two rushing in to finish their tasks), armed up to the head with bread, whilst a patient followed with two pails of tea—of course, spilling it all over the floor as he shambled along in his "regulation" heelless slippers.



#### 84 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

The rear was brought up by another patient with his towel over his head, and a great mound of running butter on a bit of newspaper, balanced on a slinged arm. Those who were up crowded round to see this melting mass divided into ounce portions, each man being supposed to have his share, but as it was guess work, some came off badly, especially those who were not present at the time. More often than not the portion barely spreads over one slice of bread.

I waited out of curiosity before I went off duty to see what would happen with the tea and milk to those in bed, and I saw the orderly going stolidly round and tipping it in all the dirty unwashed bowls of the previous night. I ran to the rescue, but it was quite futile, and ended disastrously! "These bowls must be washed," I said, determined that here I should have my way. I had been a spectator so long, that it was quite a change to come into the play. Picture it!

Orderly (pausing with tilted pail): "He should wash it 'imself; it's too late now." This difference of opinion was the last straw, and to my relief the ward master appeared on the scene. "I must really

have these bowls washed," I said (picking up one half full of sour milk), "before any of this fresh tea is tipped into it."

"*She* wants me to wash 'em *now*," said the orderly defiantly. "Catch me! They've been done once."

"Well, they want washing again," said the ward master reluctantly, bare facts being too strong this time for supporting his subordinate. (I must just explain that the orderlies' notion of washing them was to pick up one at a time, put it under a tap, and bring it back neither clean nor dry.)

"Do you 'ear?" continued the ward master, following the orderly and the pail down the ward, who continued the tipping quite regardlessly; "these bowls must be washed before you put the tea in." The situation had become ludicrous. All the patients, some with their mouths full and nearly all of them open, were straining forward in their beds to see the play, and the sweeper was leaning on his broom with an encouraging smile at his comrade, while the other, with a bowl of water, was letting it run all over the floor, too much absorbed to notice what he was doing. The orderly with a pail, meanwhile, was going on doggedly, disposing of his tea and

## 86 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

raising his voice, saying something about "not caring if he was made a prisoner of." The ward master had evidently come to threats, and after a heated confab the pail was banged down, and they both left the ward together bristling with rage (the tea being left to look after itself), and the other two orderlies doubled up with laughter.

One could almost see the curtain falling as the scene closed. I felt I was leaving a theatre instead of a hospital ward. I took the opportunity of speaking to the senior medical officer about having these bowls washed properly, but, though he sympathized with my difficulties and agreed I was right to get the cups washed, he said quite seriously, "Sister, if an orderly has been taught one way, you can never teach him another."

Thus ended another fight, with complete defeat. But I was bitterly disappointed at this remark, coming from a man like him. I would have forgiven the old Reserve, had he said it.

I haven't told you about the tent work yet, where we spend a great deal of our time. They are just outside the building. There are four rows of them, twelve down each line, where most of the wounded

are put. We are sometimes nearly five hours (with only an interval for lunch) dressing the men's wounds. The heat has been intense, sometimes reaching 103 in the shade. We all are, however, deeply interested in the work. Sister G. is quite wonderful, and though not a trained nurse works as hard as any of us. We take our dressing-box, an orderly with a pail for the dirty dressings, and begin our round every day. There are such a nice lot of men, most of them very grateful, and during the processes of changing their dressings they are really quite funny. It is as much as a man's life is worth to wince or call out. If they do, they get unmercifully teased, and the whole tent laughing at them. Great confabs go on. "Never saw a Boer," is a frequent remark. "Never saw a Boer?" we said, somewhat surprised. "Never set eyes on one, Sister," exclaimed several. "A poor game that, to be potted at like so many ninepins, and not to know where the bullet was a-comin' from. Couldn't miss us if they tried."

They also revealed the sad fact that many of them had been wounded by our own guns. They all seemed greatly puzzled by the Boer tactics.

## 38 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

Some maintained they were cowards not to come and fight in the open; the more intelligent, however, maintaining the military economy of their enemies.

"Like chucking us against a brick wall, Sister," remarked one, in answer to our interrogations on what had happened. "He (Buller) couldn't have taken the position no how." "Not a Boer to be seen anywhere, and bullets coming thick." "No sight wanted there to aim straight," chimed in a next-door neighbour.

There was one, a regular old Viking, an Australian, who had come off the minute he had heard their Government were sending troops.

"Did you not let your wife know?" we asked.

"Oh, I dropped a line to my old woman to say she wasn't to expect me till she saw me. The ship was just going, so I hadn't time to go back and tell her. But she knows me," he continued, smiling knowingly! There he stood, about 6 ft. 3 in. in his socks, looking an old giant, and I should think getting on quite for his sixties, but as unconscious of his enterprise as the babe unborn! Every day he was seated on the edge of his bed relating some of his exploits. It had apparently been a life of

## THE INCONVENIENCES OF RED TAPE 39

nothing else! He and another Australian had fearful thigh wounds, but treated them as if they were flea-bites, and were far more impressed at our dressing their wounds ("you good ladies," as he called us) than at anything else.

After the work in the tents is done, we have to turn our attention to the patients in the building. There are a good many obstacles, as the R.A.M.C. system is a very complicated one. Even the ward cannot be scrubbed without the signature of the medical officer. The greatest drawback is shortness of linen, as of course we want an enormous quantity, and we are greatly inconvenienced by not having it. "Why aren't there any sheets?" we ask from time to time. "Couldn't get none till I had your signature, Sister," replies an orderly. We tell him to go and fetch them at once.

Orderly (with great stolidity): "No good me going unless you write down what you want on a bit of paper, Sister; only get sworn at for my pains." This is in the midst of ice packings, giving of medicines, and taking of temperatures, etc., and a host of other things. Presently the orderly staggers in up to his head in sheets and counterpanes, and

#### 40 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

we run with joy to meet him and seize on the much-required sheets. But alas! they are so damp that some hours will be required before they can possibly be used. Or he returns and says, "You can't 'ave any." "Why?" "Oh, well, there is plenty on 'em, only the corporal says 'e ain't checked 'em off yet!" Mackintoshes are another of our grievances. We can't get them without "indenting" for them (absolutely necessary, as you know, for enterics). We have to write it down on a piece of paper and dispatch the inevitable orderly to take it to the dispensary. He comes back to say the dispenser can't issue *that* possibly unless the M.O.'s signature is affixed. The hunt then begins for him. Probably he is in the tents, but when secured the dispenser arrives with a tape measure, and asks if you really require one yard. On this occasion I wanted twenty, and said so, as I had not any of my patients on one, using what I had for ice packings.

"I haven't got it, Sister," he said, aghast. "If I give you a yard I have only a half left, and you will have to be responsible for it."

To ask for a syringe of any sort creates a panic. The dispenser comes up to see if you really want

this, and can you wait till to-morrow? If you cannot they must send into the town for one, but you must be responsible for that. A ball syringe is unheard of. You are looked upon quite suspiciously, and the dispenser arrives in the ward quite agitated at the bare suggestion. Then we are allowed no reserve of "reagents" in cases of collapse, such as brandy, strychnine, ether, hypodermic syringe, etc. There is only one of the latter in the whole building (nearly three hundred beds) until another is got or "indented" for, and the dispenser is responsible for that, so that he breathlessly chases you round next morning (if the doctor or we have had it the previous night), asking appealingly for his syringe. If a patient collapses, as of course they have done, the Sister has immediately to send for the "orderly medical officer" for the day, which means he has to be on duty. Then when he is found he has to write what he wants in the prescription book, and the orderly's function then comes into play again, and he is told to fly to the dispensary. When it is made up (if the patient is still alive), you duly administer it. This system of hospital work will take ten years off our lives. It really is exasperating. I can't



## 42 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

imagine how the Army Sisters put up with it. Of course, the conditions are different in peace. It might work admirably if it were only more elastic. "Parade" is a great trial, too, for then we are suddenly deprived of all our orderlies. This takes place three times a day—when we are most busy, of course. I think the way the patients arrive down from the front staggers us most. They come in ambulances drawn by mules (so suggestive of the system, though the mules answer *this* purpose admirably), and then they are all collected in a heap in the quadrangle. Not being prepared for these arrangements at first, directly we heard the sound of the wheels we all retired into our wards to see if everything was ready, expecting, of course, to have them carried straight up. As they did not appear we went to see the cause of the delay, and there, from our windows, we saw them all being turned out of the carts, sitting and lying about *on the ground*, looking exhausted and very dilapidated, having *their names* taken, which ordeal had to be gone through before they *were even admitted* into the wards, no matter what they were suffering from. After a long, hot journey and a nice jerky ride in an

ambulance wagon, driven by screaming natives, and the "cracks" of a mile-long whip, imagine the torture this must have been to some of the men.

Many of them were, of course, able to walk, but there were those who ought not to have been doing so, several of the *head cases* being in a most critical condition. It seemed, however, that unless they could absolutely not use their legs, they were all *expected* to walk. How we groaned inwardly!

After the very dreary ordeal of "name taking," they were "told off" to their different wards. Then our struggles began: to get them washed, afterwards to get them comfortable in bed, and then something to eat. But alas! in spite of many being as capable of eating as ourselves—and the men, though wounded, were hungry—the sad fact was disclosed that no rations were "drawn," and all they could have was milk, until the doctor signed up their diet sheets next morning.

"We are awfully hungry, Sister, and have had nothing for hours," the men say to us. It is a real grievance to them, but under the circumstances, as the men are falling down with enteric, it is just as well. We find it very hard to prevent the enteric patients

#### 44 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

getting hold of food, and very hard to get food for those who are only wounded when they first arrive.

The restrictions placed on the civilian medical officers are a cause of great disgust to them—every day having to mark up dozens of diet sheets, which unless done daily (though no alteration in diet recurring), the patient would get nothing till next day. The diets could be perfectly well marked on the sheet, and continued without further entry till changed. Anything that is wanted has to pass through several hands, backwards and forwards, wasting no end of time. Things for the ward that the M.O. wants—say a small thing like an inhaler, that every medical ward ought to be equipped with—has first to be “requisitioned” for by the M.O., then the order has to go to the S.M.O., who transmits it to the P.M.O., after which he sends it to the authorities. That is what occurs at home too, I hear. Mind you, I do not mean to imply that the authorities are not doing their best here, because they really are, and considering they are so throttled and bound round by red tape, I think great credit is due for what they have been able to accomplish under most trying and difficult circumstances. But

you will understand, of course, that I am not speaking individually, but only generally against red tape. No one could be better than the S.M.O. we now have. His difficulties are quite stupendous trying to get things for the hospital. The washing, taking one out of a dozen instances, amounting sometimes to a thousand sheets alone in a week, is kept long over the time (of course there is a limit to our supply), and by no manner of means can we get it back punctually, and when it does come it is so wet that it is not fit to be used. The orderlies have no scruples on this point, but we have stopped this inhuman trick fairly successfully! One man told me he had got rheumatism in consequence of damp sheets, and I asked him *why* he was *so* stupid as to allow the orderly to put them on. "Oh," he said, "I did protest, but he said it was the 'order,' and must be done, it was the day for clean sheets." "Dampness," you observe, was a mere side issue, and did not in any way affect the "order" in the eyes of the orderly!

We are certainly very lucky in having Major G., and the difference in the working of the hospital is immense; we feel anyway there is a hand at the

#### 46 COLLEGE HOSPITAL, MARITZBURG

helm. The men recognize him as one of their own officers and work better. My first-class orderly took me into his confidence one day, and informed me "the other chap" (meaning the Reserve S.M.O.) had forgotten the ways, but "'e" knows what ought to be done, and the chaps (meaning the orderlies) "can't 'do' 'im!" (Major G.). I felt considerably enlightened. This piece of information was vouchsafed to me over the polishing of the milk pails, which I was commending!

I must, however, close this long letter, but must first tell you a funny tale, that will show how far red tape can be carried, even by the humblest member of the service, for everything that is wanted.

A Sister, on visiting one of the tents, found an orderly writing a chit.

"What are you doing?" she said wonderingly.

Irish orderly, with strong brogue, "Oh—r-r—be gob, Sister, shure I am only writing a 'chit' to borrow the shovel for half an hour." Exit Sister.

Yours affectionately, X.

P.S.—Ladysmith has been relieved! Sister G. and Sister W. and self are asking to be sent there, so probably my next letter will be from there.

## LETTER III

NO. 4, GENERAL HOSPITAL,  
MOOI RIVER, *March*, 1900.

MY DEAR RUTH,

Sister W. and I found ourselves here instead of at Ladysmith, much to our disappointment, and came up here a few days ago, after the relief of Ladysmith. Sister W. was sitting disconsolately on her packed box for nearly a week before the actual order came; we got quite thin with suspense thinking it might be countermanded. However, the old familiar six-muled wagon at last bore us away from the scene of our three months' "hard labour" in Maritzburg. Quite a crowd in the way of sergeants, ward masters, orderlies, and blue-coated patients congregated to see us off the premises, deriving much entertainment from the farewells.

"You all look as pleased as if you were going

'ome," some of the men remarked; their own ardour to get to the front having considerably cooled since they had been there themselves, and ours only filled them with amused wonder. Sister W. (the superintendent) had too much to do to come to the station, but Sister G., who was following us on to Ladysmith, had arranged to come and see us off, also Sister R., who was as excited as if she were going herself. We were all excited for that matter; but after many farewells, and the waving of many handkerchiefs, into the mule-wagon we climbed, and after a liberal amount of bumping over very bad ground, the mules galloping at full speed, swaying us in all directions, in intense heat and smothered in clouds of dust, we alighted at the station. It was a great trial to say good-bye to Mrs. G., as she had been through the heat and turmoil of many months' hard work with us, and we were all very fond of her. To know her is a liberal education.

Sister R. continued her excitement at the station till the train went, and called out various messages and farewells till she faded from our view. It was really a relief, as she kept up the strain, and we



A VIEW OF THE WILLOW TREES IN MARITZBURG PARK,  
NEAR THE COLLEGE HOSPITAL

To face p. 48



1

were glad to settle down and collect our scattered senses. Sister G. had had a well-filled hamper put in the train for us, which stood us in good stead at Mooi River, owing to the reception we got.

Not till we had arrived at the station had our destination been revealed to us, and we were somewhat disappointed to see the tickets were only to Mooi River instead of Ladysmith, as we had hoped. We had heard so much of the virtues of "The No. 4" and its superiority to every other hospital in South Africa, that we became rather curious to see if it came up to the reports. As we neared Mooi River the rain was pelting in torrents. We were both very exhausted and tired, also cross, and we were looking forward to being met and conveyed to our quarters. Such luxuries were not realized. On reaching the station there was not even any one to see to our luggage. Then ensued a fearful tussle with the guard, who said as our luggage was labelled to Estcourt, there it must go. I consequently got in the van and sat on my box, and refused to move till he put it out. Finally two officers came to the rescue, hearing the hubbub we were both making, and with our united appeals the

luggage was at last secured. After this we stood on the dripping platform waiting to see if any one would come and tell us where we were to go. We looked like two henpecked fowls, with nowhere to roost. The officers had promised to send an orderly (there being no porters and no vehicles), and at last this inevitable individual appeared. Although we were as large as life, he persisted in looking in every direction but where we were standing. Typical of the species! We explained our difficulties to him, and after scratching his head and tugging at his belt (a trick of theirs), he suggested we should go to the little hotel which, he informed us, was the "officers' sick quarters," and the Sister there might be able to give some information. Feeling done up, and not caring where we went provided we got some shelter, we gladly followed the orderly's suggestion and groped our way out of the station. A small garden, that was too dark to see, and a few steps that led up to a stoep, along which he conducted us, brought us to a door, where there were lots of orderlies laughing and talking outside, and a good deal of running about with plates and clattering of knives and forks going on. He left

us in a small office, where sat a very fat sergeant, who said if he had known we were coming he would have had us met.

"You are not for here, you know," he said; "this ain't the hospital." Sister Waller and I exchanged glances of utter despair. We were so tired that we did not feel inclined to go "trapesing" all over the place. I felt I could not hold out another minute. Sister W. being of a more meek and patient disposition, however, only looked misery personified, and said pathetically, "If we could only go to bed, I shouldn't care where it was." At that moment in flustered the Sister, looking tremendously agitated. "We can't take you in here," she said; "we had no idea you were coming. Where do you come from?" Poor thing, she was busy, but her mode of greeting us did not tend to cheer us. I asked her whether she could kindly tell us where we were to go. "Oh, well," she said, "the hospital is some way from here, and there are no conveyances, so you will have to walk." "Will we!" I thought.

"I wish I could put you up here for the night, but I really can't. I must go, I am so busy," and she prepared to flounder off. In desperation I seized her

(metaphorically speaking), and said, "We cannot possibly find our way in this inky darkness, and we should not care to try." This apparently had not struck her. "Oh dear!" she said quite peevishly, "and I have no one to send." Then, as if to herself, "There is that room they might have—but no, that won't do, I really could not manage them. You see," she said aloud, "we are so busy, I do not know whom I could send with you. I could not keep you here, because although there is a room, I have no food except just enough for ourselves; one has to put up with so many inconveniences in war time," she ended with a lame smile. So we knew to our cost.

I had listened to all this, and had benefited by it. I saw she had this bedroom, and have that bedroom I meant to at all costs. So I explained to her we wanted no *food*—(thanks to Sister G.'s hamper)—that all we wanted was a *bed*, and if she would let us have that we should not trouble her any further. However, she said she could not, and went off muttering incoherently. By this time, although I felt really exhausted, I felt quite prepared to fight it out. The sergeant,

meanwhile (having seen our predicament, and hearing me arguing with Sister Waller that I should *insist* on remaining if there was a spare room), chimed in, saying, "You could perfectly well sleep in that room, Sister, no one is occupying it, and no one is likely to come to-night." I can see him now on the stool, swinging his short fat legs that were well off the ground ; but he did us a good turn, for he strengthened our position. Presently, after sitting limply on wooden chairs, the Sister reappeared, and this time with a coolie, and said in a much-relieved voice, as having solved the difficult problem, "Oh, this native will conduct you down." She could not have done anything to have made matters worse. First of all, we were honestly tired ; and secondly, I thought she need not make so many difficulties. However, Sister Waller's appealing looks at me and her whispered entreaties not to make a "fuss," reluctantly dragged me away, and we both crept out in the darkness.

We stumbled on, with the coolie in advance, not being able to see an inch before us, in deluging rain, and feeling too tired to speak. I asked the native, merely for some "loophole," how far it was,

and he said at least half a mile, which merely strengthened my determination not to even attempt it ; so after stumbling into various "foot-traps," and at length finding ourselves entangled in barbed wire, I declared nothing on earth would persuade me to go on. We extricated ourselves with anything but gentle hands, "turned tail," and wended our way to the quarters we had just left, Sister Waller following me almost in tears, and begging me *not* to go back. "*Do* come on, Sister!" she kept saying to me.

However, I followed *one* line—you invariably succeed if you do—and that was, the empty bed. I meant to get that empty room. The sergeant had told me that there were two beds in the room, so, armed with this resolve, I once more made my appearance before the much-surprised Sister. The Sister was completely nonplussed when I sank on to the stool and said we really could not go on ; and even little W. (although trembling) summoned up courage to say, "We only want the bedroom ; we shall give no trouble." The sergeant chimed in, saying, "There is nothing to prevent them having that room." Overwhelmed by numbers

she at length gave in, and a few minutes after, with a sly twinkle from the sergeant, we found ourselves in the empty room, creeping in between two blankets, and never more thankful for such luxuries in our lives.

“Worth making a fuss for, wasn’t it, W.?” I said, hearing a deep sigh of relief from the other bed. I think she said something about my persistence, and that she hadn’t it *in her*, and would do anything for peace—quite an erroneous idea, because sometimes we can’t get peace till we have fought for it; but I did not argue. We both fell sound asleep, and next day woke up quite refreshed and in the best of tempers, and very anxious to see our new abode. It was a brilliant morning after the previous night’s pelting rain, and the Sister brought us each a cup of cocoa (she evidently bore me no malice). After we were dressed we walked down to the little station to see to our luggage. Two of the night Sisters offered to conduct us to the hospital, which we saw in the distance—neat rows of white tents blazing away in the sun. I mentally commended myself on not having ventured covering such very rough road in the rain of the previous



night. We were surrounded by numerous low undulating hills, more like the Sussex Downs than the typical kopje of the country, and it all looked so soft and peaceful basking in the sun after the night's rain. "The fine influences of the morning few can indeed explain." There were other camps pitched besides the hospital; but there were no buildings or town. On arriving at the hospital the head Sister came up—a nice, homely-looking person, an Army Sister. She had never been told of our arrival, nor did she know we were expected, and said she was glad we had found somewhere to sleep, as she had no tents pitched for us. So I congratulated myself again on the previous night's victory. The victories were few and far between. It was a new experience to be under canvas, and we rather liked the idea. The other Sisters were all having their breakfast in a marquee, where we joined them. They looked very picturesque in their red capes and white flowing caps. The superintendent told me she would want one of us to go on night duty, which was rather severe, considering we neither of us knew our way about. However, being new-comers, we had to submit smilingly.

After breakfast we saw our tents being pitched, and the band from the outlying camp began to play, so it was quite cheering. Sister W. was very anxious to see if the arrangements were any better here than at Maritzburg. Every one was under canvas, and our sleeping quarters were in bell tents. The marquees looked very bright, showing all the red blankets on the beds as we passed by, and some of the men were wandering about in their blue clothes. It was arranged I was to go on night duty. I asked to be allowed to go round during the day, so as to know my way about at night, but the superintendent would not let me. I wondered how I was going to find my way in the dark, but gave it up and listened to the band. During the day it became very hot, and the flies buzzed round as I lay in bed trying to sleep. I eventually got under it. The cook, who was a coolie, kept chattering outside, and took no notice of my calling out for silence. I could see by his familiar bearing that he was under a woman. They ruin these natives. Presently Sister W. came in and brought me a cup of tea, telling me about her work as well. She had about eleven marquees to look after. She was very

sorry for my being plunged on night duty the first night, not knowing my way even about the camp, and we both began to wish we had not volunteered to come up. I was awakened about 8.30 by one of the Sisters peeping in with a lantern, and informing me I should be late for supper, adding, "You had better put on your mackintosh, as it is pelting with rain." I scrambled up and got into my things when I could find them, by a waning candle-light, and after measuring my length over the tent peg as I stepped out in the dark, I traced my way by the light and voices to the mess marquee. The Sisters, whose tents I was to look after, were very nice in giving me full explanations as to their different positions; but I felt just as much in a maze, and I was going on duty in anything but a hopeful frame of mind. A nice Sister (Noble) volunteered to accompany me. It was most kind of her, as she was very tired, and the night was so wet. In mackintoshes and gum boots we wended our way by the aid of the flickering lantern through long, tufted, uneven grass. Possessing no bump of locality, I was filled with despair as I read the different reports of each Sister on reaching the "duty" tent,

and I wondered how I should find the tents I had to visit. Sister N., sympathizing with my difficulty, volunteered to do more good works by showing me round, as several things were due. The lines of tents, although really quite in order and not difficult to discover, presented but a hopeless puzzle to my bewildered brain at night, so I accepted her offer gladly. I was not willing that any of the patients should suffer from my ignorance and the Sister superintendent's stupidity. The rain came down in sheets and rushed off our hats as we went along. As we were slushing along cautiously, for it was very slippery, we saw some other lanterns coming up, and a friendly voice shouted in the darkness, "Is that you, Sister?" and up walked one of the doctors with an orderly, amidst flashes of lightning. He said he had a very bad case of secondary hæmorrhage, and would we come and help him. So we all started off to the camp beyond the marquees, walking in the grass almost up to our knees, getting perfectly drenched, and at last reached rows of bell tents, into one of which we all crawled. There were three other beds in it, and it was positively reeking with stuffiness, with a flickering candle

nearly burnt down, presenting a very poor appearance of comfort in any shape or form. The other patients were blinking at us from under their brown blankets in a dazed manner, having only just been awakened out of a sound sleep. The corporal added light to the scene by a huge smelly swinging lantern, which he held everywhere but in the right place. And we all got rather mixed up, there being no means of getting round the other side of the bed. However, the patient was at last fixed up, and we left him looking very pale, but as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and the others once more preparing to bury their heads under the blankets. It was a pathetic little scene. These poor fellows, lying in their different tents, formed a touching picture with their few comforts; and the doctor peered into several others on our way down, making inquiries of the different orderlies as to the various cases. The rain had forced its entry into many of the tents, and there was a loud drip, drip, in the silence of the night, many of the beds wedged together to avoid the pools collecting on them. "Poor devils!" muttered the doctor, as we wended our way along. "Yes, indeed, poor devils!" I

thought to myself as I tried to keep up with the soliloquizing doctor, for each step I took I went one back. I felt one, too. The water was rushing down in streams, and its noise was only broken by groans proceeding from the various tents, that sounded very weird in the darkness and storm, and was also very distressing. I did not like that first night on duty at all. I measured my length several times in pools, for the ground was so slimy. There were many sad cases of complete loss of nerve, men crying like babies and begging for morphia. "Can't get to sleep," sobbed one man, whose tent I had traced from the groaning and loud voices. "Is that all you are making that noise for?" I said, rather severely. "You would make more if you were in my place," he said, keeping his eyes well closed. I thought probably I would, but did not say so. "He always goes on like this, Sister, every night," whispered the orderly by my side, "and 'e only wants morphia."

"Are you in pain?" I inquired, more to feel my ground than anything else. "No," he wailed, "I can't get to sleep. Give me some of that needle stuff that sends me to sleep; the doctor said I might

have it if I liked." "No, he didn't, now," corrected the orderly, whose patience seemed very tried by this patient. A good deal of wrangling went on between them, disturbing several of the others, who sat up in their beds rubbing their eyes and feeling for the pipes. I eventually had to speak very firmly to the poor man, reminding him there were many really suffering more pain, and bearing it quietly, and he must try and do the same, and not disturb all the others. "Don't want you 'ere," he said, weeping. "I shall make as much noise as I likes." Poor thing, he had lost all his control, and was like a child, and he eventually had a sleeping-draught, that was to be given as a last resort. In returning to the duty tent to look over the order book, I found my night companion doing likewise. She was literally soaked, and we compared notes. Funnily enough, I knew her mother. Just as we were starting out on our rounds again, a frightened orderly rushed in breathlessly, begging us to come at once, saying that another man was bleeding to death, and would I go on, as he was going for the doctor. Not yet being sure of my way, Sister L. volunteered to come with me, and we traced the

tent by a lantern outside right at the top of the camp in the bell tents. The man was deadly pale, and was spurting blood in large quantities from his arm. There being nothing else to do but to apply pressure, we waited until the doctor arrived, and after much difficulty (with such dim lights) the artery was tied up. On stepping out of the tent, another orderly tumbled up against us, saying a man was bleeding from the mouth, and could we come at once. And so off we tore, to find it was from the lungs this time, and that he was hanging over the bed vomiting blood, with an orderly assisting him in this position.

After laying him flat on his back and giving him some ice to suck, and injecting ergotine, he had to be left likewise—the doctor to sleep, and I and Sister L. returned to our different duties. I think some of the head cases were the most distressing, accompanied with entire loss of speech and hearing, as well as paralysis. There was one poor man in this pitiable condition, who distressed me very much every time I visited his tent. He seemed in a great state of mind, and would clutch at my hand, trying to speak and gazing at me in an agonized



way. The whole of his face was quite black from a shell, and he was completely paralysed as well, except for his arms. I got him a piece of paper and pencil in the hopes that he might write what he evidently wished to say, and he would even make attempts, but it was no good. His appealing eyes haunted me as he lay in the dim light, especially as I knew I couldn't relieve him. I dreaded visiting that tent, as he always gave me the impression he wanted to say something, and his groans were awful.

The hospital was equipped for five hundred beds, and over a thousand had to be accommodated. The P.M.O. had even to give up his office, and in two tin huts all the beds were jammed together. That was a horrible sight. The civilian doctors were slaving all day, as many as 192 patients to look after, and at first they had no Sister in their tents. Such a huge inrush was unexpected. I never saw a R.A.M.C. doctor; they all seem to be civilians: they at any rate are doing all the principal work here, and the work has, I should say, been heavier than at any other place on this side, as all the wounded were brought straight from Colenso,

Spion Kop, and Pieters Hill. They have done some splendid work here, being at it hard till 10 and 12 p.m., often called up at all hours of the night. There are also some excellent orderlies, really indefatigable in their attentions to the patients, and the doctors speak most highly of them. I forgot to mention that there are some Boers amongst the patients, who persist in lying in bed with their trousers on. I asked one if he would not be more comfortable in pyjamas, but he smiled and said he preferred what he had on—his own trousers. I never found this man asleep, curiously enough. He had a lance wound in his thigh, and he suffered a good deal with it. He was a typical-looking Boer, with his long unkempt beard, pale face, and high forehead, but with a clear, kindly eye. We often held political debates in the dead of the night as to the issues of the war, and he did not seem to resent my numerous questions. He spoke very highly of our soldiers, and said he wished the war would end, though he said the Boer leaders would never give in. He had a wife and five children, but he did not know where any of them were. No wonder he could not sleep! I was much touched by his

fortitude and patience. He never complained once from not sleeping. Their nerves are certainly superior to our men's. We used to get very hungry on night duty, being too lazy to carry our food down from our tent to the duty one, consequently we went without. The great big, fat, chattering, lazy coolie, who ought to have done it, was not allowed by the Sister Superintendent—I cannot imagine why.

It has continued raining steadily every night. Sometimes we are visited by a mounted orderly, who comes out of the darkness with a dispatch, and disappears into it again. How they find their way is a mystery.

I was never very sorry to see the clear streak of light appearing over the hills, indicating the dawn of day. It was worth while being on night duty to see the sun-rises alone, preceded by that pure, piercingly clear gold light deepening into reds and mauves. It seemed to bring out the dark smooth outlines of the surrounding hills, making one feel—combined with the rarefied atmosphere—almost merged in them by their apparent nearness. It was very charming after the night strain. The stillness

was wonderful. It made one feel one's own individuality almost alarmingly, as if that and God alone existed. It certainly made one forget everything—hospital, war, pain, suffering, and even home, and to feel one with Nature.

Feeling the warm earth like a thing alive,  
And gathering virtue in at every pore  
Till it possessed me wholly and thought ceased,  
Or was transfused in something to which thought  
Is coarse and dull sense. Myself was lost,  
Gone from me like an ache, and what remained  
Became part of the universal joy.

Such reveries were of short duration, as the camp seemed suddenly to spring to life, and quite another scene sprang up soon after—very true to life, the sublime with the ordinary. Blue-coated patients with their towels over their heads going to wash or fetch water, some also issuing from the cooking-house with big pails of tea. The marquees being rolled up, accompanied by loud complaints from various "grouzers" about the cold, draughts, etc., soon gave an air of activity, filling the tents with delicious fresh morning air, that during the night are almost unbearable by their stuffiness.

We then take our last round, and retire till the

following night. There is a rumour that they are sending nurses up from here to Ladysmith, so Sister W. and I are hoping we shall be of the number. We shall then hope to join Sister G. again.

Yours affectionately,

X.

## LETTER IV

NO. 11 FIELD HOSPITAL,  
TIN CAMP, LADYSMITH, *April*, 1900.

DEAR R.,

Ladysmith at last! We came up here early in March, and I must relate some of our experiences, especially the journey, which was rendered quite entertaining by one of the Sisters of the party, who came up unexpectedly with us, arriving at Mooi River the night we started.

I was lying under my bed one afternoon, evading the flies and trying to find the coolest spot to enable me to sleep, when one of the Sisters came in, and said, "I have good news for you. You are to go up to Ladysmith to-night, so you had better get up at once." I rolled out from under my bed at once, and as Sister W. came in to echo the news, I danced round my tent with joy. We were both tremendously keen on getting into Ladysmith. We learnt

that we were to be dispatched with two others, one of whom I have already mentioned, and who was then strolling about dressed in khaki—a big, strapping-looking woman. After packing and having our dinner, we all lay down till 1 a.m., as the train did not go till then. The superintendent had arranged to come and see us off—an unnecessary piece of conscientiousness. We lit our candles at 1 a.m., and crept out of our tents. It was an odd little sight, seeing figures creeping about in the dark with little lights like gigantic glow-worms. As I stepped out my attention was quite diverted by the night, which was really sublime. The moon had just set in the west, spreading a cold, clear, crispy light over the hills. I have never seen anything so striking before, almost like the rising of the sun, and the stars more brilliant than ever; it was most impressive. It was with real reluctance I turned to go, my soliloquies being broken by a loud whispered call by the practical superintendent to come and have something to *eat*; so the scene was changed to a marquee, and four women eating and drinking. Alas, the contrast! The strange mixture of the sublime and commonplace again.

The fourth Sister looked foreboding and of rather a stiff "make," and her black dress was in character with her physique—stiff! I think one must be more critical at 1 a.m. than at any other time, because every little detail was impressed on me that night. The stiff Sister insisted on walking just a little apart, and the khaki one kept up in brisk steps, as well as conversation, with the superintendent, who headed the little party. We learnt that Sister K. headed everything if she could. The password was "Lichfield." The sentry's loud cry of "Who goes there?" rather startled us all, ringing out in the deathly stillness of the night. I suppose it was telepathy, but we all experienced a fear whether Sister would say the right word as "password," was called out by him, and he droned out, "All's well!" and we sped by with as great relief as if we had just escaped being bitten by a dangerous dog. Our tickets and passes being procured, the train, after a long wait, came in. We discovered that there was no lying-down accommodation, and it was only by splitting up into two's that room was found for us at all. The khaki Sister went off with the "stiff" one, who, I was amused to notice, remained



obdurate to all outward enthusiasm. Sister W. and I remained together, and we were thankful, as the khaki Sister was too brisk for us at 1 a.m. We were both quite overcome with fatigue, and relieved to get even a seat. I must say we both ached to lie down. We arrived at Chieveley in the morning, and, as usual, forgot the night's woes in the exhilarating, inspiring atmosphere. The camp was close to the station, and all the Tommies looked filthy and worn-out—home-sick too, I think, poor things! The horses and mules, with their drooping heads, looked the same. The sun was just rising over the hills, and we were able to see the surrounding country, which was flat, though interspersed with little kopjes. We passed heaps of wagons with supplies, being drawn by oxen-teams of sixteen and eighteen, as we went along in the train: the country we sped through was most impressive owing to the recent historical events, in spite of the various signs of the troops' march up, in the way of dead animals and old tins. We reached Colenso at 7.30, where we were all told to alight. Young Randolph Churchill was on the train too. The station was simply a mass of soldiers, and the flies

were worse than anything I had ever seen yet. They nearly drove us wild, and filled the atmosphere. We hastened off to see to our luggage. As we were pointing it out to an orderly, the khaki Sister came up saying that a medical officer had been speaking to her, and had kindly offered to give us all breakfast at their mess. Would we come? It was two miles away. The "stiff" Sister was quite shocked at the idea of four spinsters attacking the abode of bachelors, and turned her back on us, but on our pointing out the unpleasantness of the station (due to the pest of flies), and the train not going for three hours, and with a chance of seeing the Colenso battlefield and other positions, as well as the *bachelors*, she at length allowed herself to be persuaded by Sister W. and myself, who being much elated at the prospect of having so interesting a walk before us, with a guide, forgot our fatigue and any impropriety, and followed Sister K. with great enthusiasm. Our elation, however, was of short duration, for even before we had left the platform all our hopes had sunk. We saw the cruel situation. Without a word of warning Sister K. took to her feet (without giving the

M.O. a chance of seeing us) and walked him off without the slightest scruples. I can see that picture now. The rose-tinted trackless veldt, lying before us in the fresh morning air, with two figures far ahead speeding away, and three jaded mortals trying to follow on. The situation was certainly very ludicrous ; annoying as it was, we could not help seeing that. We were so awfully sold. We gazed after the stalwart dame, who with her flat-heeled, stout walking boots seemed to be covering the ground with extraordinary and enviable rapidity, as if her life depended on it, while the "stiff" Sister was keeping her usual pace in advance of us, on the "off-side," in dead silence, with her tall peaked hat and strained back hair, looking more unapproachable than ever ; her cape pulled severely and tightly round her shoulders, and a black cotton umbrella held up to ward off the flies, and us too, from encroaching. The elastic of her hat was not the least part of this lady, for it cut up a distinct boundary line from one side of her head to the other.

In spite of our chagrin, we could not help laughing. There was Sister K. having everything pointed

out to her, the M.O. at times drawing up and pointing his stick in different directions, evidently showing her the various positions our troops and the enemy had occupied. It was most tantalizing, as you may imagine. On they tore, never once turning back on their three exhausted, travel-stained comrades. We thought it extremely rude of the officer not even to turn round and see what had become of his other three guests. I expected, really, he wanted to get on. They got smaller and fainter in the distance, and were presently lost to view amongst a lot of tents. To do the khaki Sister justice, I really believe she had forgotten our existence. We eventually crawled into camp, being left to find our way as best we could. We arrived at the tent very hot, and found her seated in a chair awaiting us with great composure. After reproaching her for her selfishness, for which she heartily apologized, we had breakfast. We despaired of either getting butter or jam, owing to the flies, but we were very grateful to get anything, and it was really kind of the M.O. to have asked us up. The stiff Sister sat opposite me, with her tall, black-brimmed hat as a prominent foreground against the background

of the tent, and really took my appetite away. I always felt that hat; it was as much her as anything. She never attempted to speak, but maintained a rigid silence. Sister Khaki, who made up for any gaps, and greatly refreshed by her meal, at last sprang up full of energy on seeing a medical officer approach. He came to say he would be delighted to conduct us back if we had finished our breakfast. Our new guide proved in every way satisfactory, and kept falling back from Sister K.'s side to point out all the different positions that had been held by our troops and those of the enemy. We found we were almost walking on the battlefield of Colenso, and as we all paused to look in the direction it lay, we found it was difficult to realize that terrible event in the plain that stretched before us, peacefully basking in the sun, and looking one mass of rose-coloured tints in the early morning. It was, of course, intensely interesting and awe-inspiring, except when we thought of "what might have been" instead of "what had been"! On reaching the station the M.O. then left us. We found we had to cross the Tugela River by a small footbridge, as the one in course of erection was not

yet finished. As we were hurrying off we ran against Mr. R. G., who told us that Mrs. G. had sustained a severe accident and broken her leg in descending the steep hill at Maritzburg to the hospital to take up her duties. The boy had lost control, and she was flung out. This disaster put an end to her joining us, and we felt greatly depressed. Mr. G. had also a collar-bone broken.

As we crossed the Tugela the water was rushing and gurgling over the massive wreck of the bridge that lay in the river, and it was impossible to remain unmoved as we stood and watched the swollen waters washing over it. The other was in course of erection. We recalled all the unsuccessful attempts that had been made to cross this river by our troops. I felt giddy, and nearly fell in, but was seized upon by the khaki Sister, who was, as usual, alert. On our way in the train we passed the spot where the Boers had heaped up thousands of sand-bags on the banks of the river for the purpose of damming it up and inundating Ladysmith. Had they carried out their intentions, Intombi (the neutral ground for our sick and wounded) would have been swamped first. We also passed that

camp hospital in the train, and were glad we had not to alight there, as, from all accounts, most terrible things had been going on, and the officers who had come down after the relief had brought heartrending stories, and many could not even speak of it. The demoralization amongst the orderlies had been appalling, I believe. An officer gave me a description of his reception there. He was put in the train at Ladysmith, and when he reached Intombi, as no one met him, he remained where he was, thinking that shortly some one would come and fetch him. The train, after some time, was shunted on to a siding and there left. After a time one of the railway men came along, and seeing him lying there, asked if he wanted anything. He said he was ill with enteric, and he was waiting to be fetched to the hospital. The door was slammed, and presently another man looked in, this time a sergeant, who, greatly surprised at seeing an officer, suggested he should get out and walk to the hospital to meet the difficulty, as no one seemed to be coming ; so the poor thing had to get up, and was conducted to a marquee by his adviser, who, seeing an empty bed, advised him

to occupy it. Nothing loath, he lay down, feeling very ill, poor thing, and presently a Sister looked in and asked who he was, and said, "Oh, you should not be there! but as you are" (on reflection) "you had better remain!" And remain there he did. He never had his bed *made once*, and only saw the Sister when his temperature was being taken, and he was allowed to eat anything he could get when once off milk diet. It was not possible, you see, for such numbers to get nursed with so small a staff as they had. Being strong, he survived *in spite* and *not because* of his treatment.

We at last steamed into Ladysmith, where a mule wagon was awaiting us, that conducted us to our destination, which proved to be the Tin Camp. After trying unsuccessfully to procure some tea in the hotel, which we found closed, we prepared to go on. The town was uninteresting, and looked desolate, the dust being appalling. However, the khaki Sister announced her wish to stop at the telegraph office. She proclaimed she must send a telegram to the Intelligence Department to announce our arrival in Ladysmith. "They certainly ought to know," she said. We wondered how the telegram



would be received. We knew, of course, she had made it out in the singular, and that was about the one consolation we could derive, but we felt amazed that any one could do such a ridiculous thing. It, in all probability, was never sent.

Finally the mules drove us up to the P.M.O.'s quarters, a tin hut, and he, with one or two medical officers, came out and received us very kindly, asking us in, and offering us something to quench our thirst. He expressed regret that he could not provide tea without some delay, and Sister K., who was very thirsty, was eventually quieted by a lemon drink. After some conversation about the future arrangements of our work, we suggested going to our quarters. On the way to our huts Sister K.'s second proclamation came out. "I shall go and call on *all* the generals and colonels, as they ought to know we are here!" "Where is the time coming in?" we asked at last, to which we got no answer, she being too much occupied in looking at her new surroundings. She was very amusing and always cheerful, two great virtues that hide many sins. We liked our quarters very much, in spite of shell damages which had made huge holes in the roofs



*From Stereograph, Copyright,  
Underwood & Underwood, London & New York*

TUGELA RIVER, OVER WHICH WE CROSSED ON OUR WAY TO  
LADYSMITH, SHOWING TERMINATION OF RAILWAY LINE

To face p. 80



100

and floors ; and the quartermaster was indefatigable in his zeal to make us comfortable. The officers kindly picked out some good Indian natives and sent them to act as our servants. We could see everything was being done to make us comfortable. We finished the day in settling in, and Sister K. was very happy, having chosen her hut to her satisfaction, and giving vent to it in unmusical songs. Next morning we walked across the camp to take up our duties. The surrounding scenery was rather fine, very rocky and rugged in its adjacent kopjes and deep blue mountains in the far distance ; but the camp itself presented no attractions, consisting of rows and rows of corrugated iron huts, with no sort of shade, and a merciless sun beating on them all day, and the most appalling smells and dust everywhere.

We found the P.M.O. awaiting us, and he further explained that this was only a field hospital belonging to the Indian contingent, and that we should find the wards in a very bad state, as up till now they had not been able to get anything. He further introduced two other medical officers, Major P. and Captain C., whose wards we were to work in. They

both looked very nice, and were so apologetic about everything, when taking us round the wards, that we tried to conceal our horror at the state of affairs.

The real condition of the wards and the men was appalling, and Major P. described what an awful time they had had, not being able to get anything, and the things he had asked for and never got, *although the line had been open for nearly a fortnight*. He had sent in a long list, and one day an ox-wagon had at last arrived. With great joy he went to meet it, hoping to find pillows, mattresses, sheets, pillow-cases, and a hundred and one other necessities he had applied for, and lo and behold, one ounce of glycerine! Was it not enough to make one cry? They had been nearly off their heads, and up half the night nursing the men. Both he and Captain C. are splendid men. In spite of the awful state of affairs, we feel we cannot complain after what they have been through. When Major P. came in and saw us sponging, his eyes almost filled with tears as he said in a voice full of emotion, "It is the very thing I have been wanting so much for these poor fellows, and never

been able to get." It was quite touching to see the relief he felt about it, and in seeing some of his patients getting the nursing they required. He is ill and worn out himself, but will not give up, although he is soaked with fever! But for our previous experiences and the lessons we had learnt thereby, I think we should have been absolutely dismayed at everything. There was no linen of any sort, no pillows, except flat straw bolsters (the regulation ones) with waists—and the poor patients' heads sinking in the holes—awful mattresses; and to sum up the whole matter, they were just off the floor. Most distressing of all was the condition of the men themselves. Rows of white and yellow-boned, hollow-eyed men were lying or sitting up in their beds, and a few were crawling about with their clothes literally hanging on bones, waiting on one another. The orderlies on our approach had hastily entered their wards concealing their pipes—smoking, as usual. The heat was intense, and those with fever were lying panting and saturated with perspiration, loaded with blankets, their poor mouths all clogged together, and the flies swarming round them in thousands with their horrid buzzing noise,

and their heads rolling from side to side on their mountainous bolsters.

Truly it was a sight to haunt one for the rest of one's days. Not a comfort of any sort. There were appealing cries for food as the doctor took us round, which one could see was positive pain for him to refuse. There were lots of scurvy, yet in spite of this pitiable condition one could not help being struck with the patience and fortitude it was all met with by these brave men. They were cracking their little jokes, and trying to keep up a cheerful spirit. We could have wept. The officers' ward was a little better, one or two having the luxury of a cork mattress, and a few had their own pillows. Their "kit," however, was all over the floor, under the beds, and even blocking up the spaces between them. "We keep it here," said one of the officers to me, "because otherwise we should never see it again. I hope you won't have it taken away," he added anxiously.

After the doctor had left us, Sister W. and I had a confab to ourselves. It was no good concealing the fact that we were utterly shocked by all we had seen, and it was difficult to know where to begin, as

we had nothing to start on. There was not even soap. We were told the assistant surgeon (who was a native of India and a very competent man) always took the temperature, and although we did not at first like this, we afterwards found it a great boon, as it left us time to do the "spongings." We saw it was no good trying to go on any pre-conceived lines, so we arranged to do as much "cleaning up" as we could, thereby trying first of all to bring a purer atmosphere into the wards. All the men seemed very pleased to have us, and made light of everything, trying to be as cheerful as they could. The officers were *not* so keen, as they told me afterwards that they were frightened to death when the doctor brought me in, as they knew all their luggage would be removed, and that they could no more do as they liked. Sister Waller related a conversation that was most touching, from one of the men in her ward. "So 'ome-like to see a petticoat about," he explained (in the act of having his face nicely washed). "It does us a world of good, just to see yer, Sister." "We haven't seen a woman this long while," chimed in his neighbour. "Yes, yer 'ave," came a correcting voice in another



direction. "Not from 'ome," he maintained, "and Boer women don't count." This was considered wit, and produced some weak laughter, thus closing the debate. They were unbounded in their gratitude, and we often wished we could do more; but sharing the half of another ward with Sister W., we had to divide up our attentions as much as we could. In consequence of the lumpy and hard mattresses, there were most deplorable bed sores in the men's wards, owing to the blankets and barrack sheets they had been obliged to lie on, and a few had only mackintoshes. Some of the orderlies were utterly terrible. They were "sick of the whole job," as they termed it, and spent every moment they could either in "sloping off" or standing outside smoking. They nearly drove us crazy. Of course they had had a hard time; but knowing their ideas of work, and considering the immense amount there was to be done, and the bad spirit they did it in, we did not waste our pity on them. In the officers' ward was what was termed "an old soldier," which perhaps you may not understand, but it meant that he was a "formed" individual, and nothing could either impress or alter him. He had awful creaking

boots, which he exercised freely, at the expense of the wretched officers' nerves. On discovering that he kept the jam, bread, and butter on the floor, with the tea in an open jar, and the "sweeper," an Indian native (who religiously swept thrice daily with a switch broom), scattering clouds of dust all over the ground-floor larder, I told him to get a box and cover it all up. He strongly resented my suggestion, and said he had been nursing for some twenty odd years, and he did not want to be told how to do things at his time of life. He looked upon me as an interloper, and made everything he did a favour or a difficulty. He was much annoyed at my arrival, having before that event run the ward on his "own," and, being the only one, the officers naturally spared him as much as possible, but woke up when they saw how tiresome he was. He called all the officers to me by their surnames. One trick of his was to stew the tea for four hours, and the officers complained very much to me about this, so I told him not to do it. They were quite in his hands. He was invulnerable to swearing, so they had not even that to fall back upon. He absolutely ignored what he termed my interference, and said

the way I gave orders to have it done did not make tea at all, and *he* did not want to be told *how* to make tea. He was quite a character, and revelled in all the officers' leavings, helping himself without the least compunction to anything they had in the way of extras, and used to sit on the form outside the hut literally surrounded by his various collections of food. At any other time he would have amused me, but the times were too grim and harrowing. In the midst of our dilemmas, however, a wire from Sister G. cheered us considerably, telling us to let her know if we wanted anything ; so we wired back to say we had nothing, and wanted methylated spirits, matches, sheets, pillow-cases most ; and I also wrote a letter describing our deplorable state of poverty. This was immediately followed up by three huge hampers containing untold luxuries, and you would have been amused to have seen us opening them. Knowing they would be weeks arriving, she had put the hampers in charge of a gentleman who was coming up, and who very kindly saw them delivered into our *very* hands. There was great excitement in opening the boxes, and the "old soldier" played up well on this

occasion, though he made a tremendous hammering. We nearly cried with joy on seeing rolls of sheets tumbling out, pillow-cases, pyjamas, and yards of mosquito netting, which we were simply longing for, and which all the officers and men immediately clamoured after. There were no end of groceries, such as tea, coffee, arrowroot, sugar, chocolate, biscuits, etc., and, above all, a large jar of methylated spirits, accompanied by two spirit lamps, which indeed proved a godsend, as we are now able to make the officers and men their tea, also their arrowroot. This certainly saved the situation, and I really cannot think what we should have done without these things. It was such a joy taking in the extra tea to the men, which we were able to take from the officers' wards. Such eager eyes greeted our entrance, and those who were allowed to have it, seized their mugs, tipping any previous beverages they held on to the floor, holding out long lean arms, while voices called out each day exultingly, "I am on tea now, Sister." "Just a drop, Sister," comes a weak pleading voice from one on a more limited diet; "my temperature is down to-day." On getting the "drop" he eagerly clutched at the

mug, tipping (in spite of my endeavours) a good deal down his neck in over-anxiety to get every drop, watched meanwhile by many sympathizing eyes as he smacked his lips in much appreciation, passing his hand over his mouth as an apology for a handkerchief, accompanied by grunts of satisfaction. "Where is your handkerchief?" I often say. "Oh, 'ere it is," producing the filthiest rag you ever saw. "I have had it three weeks, Sister," calls out another with great pride, followed by yet another, who sang out, "Well, you don't beat me, for I have 'ad this 'ere shirt on eight weeks come next Toosday—ever since I've been in." So another joy is taking round clean handkerchiefs and shirts whenever we can get them. They are incidents in the day to these poor things, and they welcome anything. It is pathetic seeing thin arms beckoning from various beds, and filthy rags held up as guarantees for clean ones. As there were never enough to go round, we had to put searching questions as to how long each had had his. Horrible revelations came out in consequence, though not always trustworthy, owing to their anxiety to procure a clean one.

There is one poor man here who is only just

alive, but he is so amusing that he keeps the men in fits of laughter. It is an odd thing that they are often very witty in this weak condition, but when well quite ordinary, even stupid. This man in question is in a terrible state—a bag of bones, dreadful bed sores, high temperature at night, and one wonders how he lives. The flies swarm round him, covering his eyes and mouth, which he is quite indifferent to, and looks at you with surprised wonder if you flap them off. "Now, they weren't 'urting you," he exclaimed one day to me. "They must be so nasty," I replied humbly. "Oh, we be used to one another," he said, looking at me composedly and at the flies affectionately. He loves his tea, and winks away at his next bedfellow on my entering with the teapot, and simply gulps it down. He is much appreciated by all the men, and those further down the ward lean on their elbows and crane their necks to watch the expressions on his face, or to catch what he says. Poor thing! and yet one cannot pity him, for he is quite unconscious of his discomforts, and the spirit he displays is worthy of a Socrates.

Clean linen is only to be had every now and

again, and there are no nice pillows. If I turned his bolster for him, he said, "Now don't you go meddling with that," in such a funny way that every one had to laugh. I often run in and see him, and I think he rather likes it, though he would not own up to it. I expect when he is clear in the head he will be quite stupid. I often learnt lessons in that ward, though they little knew it, and my thoughts strayed back to many of my private luxurious patients at home, who, though they had everything they could wish for, were as little aware of their blessings as this man was of his hardships. One thing rather astonishes me amongst the men, and that is their callousness about those who die. I suppose in one way it saves great depression, for they are dying off like flies, as many as five a day in one ward sometimes! "'E's just gone," one man announced with much elation, hitching his thumb in the direction of the screens, as I entered one day. "'E knew he was dying directly he got champagne," said the next bed-fellow. "They never get it in the army, Sister, till a feller is 'kicking the bucket,' and some won't take it on that account; *that* and the screens are sure

signs 'e's goin' to die," he ended up in explanatory tones. Their conversation did not in the least diminish while the dead men were in the wards, but of course we stopped this, as it was no penalty. As soon as they are dead, the dhoolie bearers come and convey the bodies away, the empty bed being immediately filled. The silent forms on those stretchers were indeed a melancholy sight as they passed frequently by, and it was a good thing our time was so fully occupied, otherwise we should not have been able to bear it.

These half-starved men died very gradually, and each day it is truly haunting to see living skeletons, with hollow eyes, gaunt cheek-bones, sitting or lying up in bed, eagerly trying to get down as much food as they can. Tinned rabbit for choice. They have turned against the tinned milk utterly, and there is not enough fresh—only forty pints of it amongst eleven hundred! Of course a great mistake had been made after the siege in allowing the men to eat as much as they liked. It simply killed dozens, because they were not able to digest full rations. A General, whom I was nursing, said to me, "We have made a great mistake about it,



and it is killing the men." Truly, we so-called mature mortals are as yet in our infancy as regards common sense. It is indeed as "rare as genius"—to quote Emerson. Mrs. K. (wife of General K.) is up here, and does all she can. She is in the camp all hours of the day in the most grilling heat, and does no end of good work—brings fans, fly-papers, eau-de-Cologne, etc. The men love it, and it is nice to see some one who is not a nurse. She gets her cook to make custards and other delicacies for the officers and men.

Amidst all these tragedies I must give you rather an amusing account of General B., who was most seriously ill with enteric when he was brought in, and was for days quite off his head. He was under all sorts of delusions, one being that the floor and ceiling were meeting, and that he could not escape. This made him like a bear. He refused all food, and roared at the orderlies, who weren't quite sure whether he was really sane or not when he said he would have them made prisoners, and they, therefore, treated him as a general instead of a patient. I was frightfully busy with two wards on my hands, and many men were even worse than he, so I

couldn't give him undivided attention. "I can't get 'im to take 'is milk, Sister," said the orderly to me; "'e ain't touched a drop of milk all the morning—in fact, 'e nearly shied it at my 'ead." I took the offending glass and approached the General, who lay watching me like some fierce beast ready to spring at the least provocation. "Take that d——d beastly stuff away!" he growled; "I tell you I won't take it." "Come now, General," I said authoritatively, "you must really try and drink this milk; you've had nothing all day." "I tell you I won't; you would like to poison me, but I'll take good care you don't." "Here!" he exclaimed, making a mighty spring up (I made a mighty spring back to save the glass), "take that poison away." I thought it was time to use severity, so I surveyed him severely and said, "I conclude you are a married man?" "Yes, what of that?" he said, eyeing me savagely and defiantly. "Well," I continued, "all I can say is, you have some one else to think about beside yourself, and unless you take this milk you will never get well. Think of your wife, and take it as a duty, even if you don't like it, and set a good example to the ward."

This tirade was followed by a dead silence, with a watchful, stealthy eye on me and the movement of the glass of milk, and thinking I had at last touched a tender spot, I put my hand under his pillow to raise his head, when he sprang up, bellowing, "Take your hand away, woman! Don't put your arm round my neck! I will not take that poison if you stop here all day." I assured him I hadn't time to waste on him, and the officers were inclined to take him seriously, but I said, "You wait; he will yet be one of my best patients."

Opposite his bed was a young Mr. D. most dangerously ill and not expected to live. He was in the midst of a bad attack of enteric, so I gave him all the available time I could. After sitting up with him for three nights, not daring to leave him with the orderlies (as he was quite delirious, and I knew they would sleep), the General called me to his bed, in quite an altered voice, and said—

"When are you going to bed?" "I am not going," I replied; "Mr. D. is too ill." "You are up all day as well," he continued; "you must get some sleep." I felt the General was *my* friend

from that moment. He took everything I wanted him to, and was most amenable.

The day before they were all being sent home, the Sister Superintendent came to me and said, "A nurse has arrived from Maritzburg, and says Colonel L. sent her; would General B. like to see her?" I told her they were all off next day, but nevertheless went and told the General of her arrival. "Don't bring the woman near me," he said in amused horror. "I think you had better see her, don't you?" I said. "It would be more polite." And eventually he graciously consented,

I went over to tea, and there sat a woman of the most enormous bulk, overlapping her chair, with her "extensive empires" puffing up and down as she breathed like some engine. She was clothed in black, with a tall hat of crape, and, as I looked at her, I mentally determined the General should not miss seeing her. She was the kind of person I have heard men say (*never* a woman) that would never see her feet again.

When I returned to the ward, I hurried to the General's bedside, saying, "I am so glad you are going to see Colonel L.'s nurse; she is such a

charming-looking woman, quite young, with lovely fair hair and large soft eyes"—I saw the General's face softening, and a look of interest stealing in—"and such a lovely figure," I said, warming up, and piling on as much as I could. Sister W., who had followed me in to see the fun, added her eulogies as to the beauties of this unknown dame. "Oh, well," said the General, with seeming indifference in his voice, though his face belied his words, "I suppose it is only polite to see her. That L. is a funny fellow to send her up just when I am going. When shall I see her, Sister? Now, if you like." This with great anxiety.

However, I wished the General to have a good night, so I promised to bring her over in the morning, and left him looking rather disappointed. I told the other officers about it, so as to enable them to enjoy the fun. Next morning she steamed across the camp with me and entered the ward, which, being only a tin hut and on slender foundations, vibrated and shook considerably under this unaccustomed weight. (We are all light in Ladysmith!) I saw all the officers diving under the bed-clothes, ghastly coughs going on; but the General

was my centre of interest. To my horror, he lay with his mouth gaping open, and his eyes glued on her to such an extent that, though I was splitting with laughter, I hurried forward to break the awful spell that had come over him, for he looked horror-struck. "This is the nurse whom Colonel L. sent to nurse you," I said hurriedly. He then so far recovered as to stammer out some polite inquiries as to her journey, and at last gasped out, "I—I—I don't really want a nurse, as I—I am nearly well now"; after which I bore her away. I bolted behind the screen, for the General lay silent in his bed, and I wasn't sure I hadn't offended him. But after an alarming pause, broken only by spurts of merriment from the officers, a great voice rolled slowly out, as if to himself, "I'll have L.'s blood for that." Then there was a tremendous outburst, and we all gave vent to prolonged laughter, in which the General joined; but he never referred to the subject again, and, needless to say, no more did I.

We had the most alarming hailstorm here one day. It was so terrific that it smashed all the windows of the huts in about two minutes. The wretched patients dived under their bedclothes,

smothered "D's" issuing from under the sheets and blankets as we flew round to pull the beds out. The officers said it was like shrapnel-firing at Colenso—the hail made the most frightful row, pelting down on corrugated iron huts, and dancing about on the floor like demented demons! We picked up a barrel-full, the stones being as big as bull's-eyes. It was most opportune, as it supplied us with ice that we were desperately in need of.

We get amusing tussles with the officers' friends, who till our advent had been inundating the wards at all hours of the day till 9 p.m., but of course we could not possibly allow this to continue, and although there were many complaints, I remained obdurate to all entreaties. Many of the friends coolly walked into the wards without asking, but they were met by yours truly! I had a notice put up on the door, with the hours of admission.

Such as the following were some of the encounters:—

Officer, walking in serenely. Sister, meeting him frigidly: "May I ask you what you want?"

Officer: "I have come to see General B."

Sister: "General B. is very ill, and this is not the hour to see him, anyway" (8.30 p.m.).

The General (from his bed): "Let him come, Sister. Come on! come on!" beckoning with all his might.

Officer (looking very annoyed): "But can't I see him? You see he wants me."

Sister (gradually edging him to the door): "No, I am afraid not."

Officer (pleadingly): "Only a minute."

Sister (unmoved): "Not for a minute,"

And he is eventually backed out of the door.

They do not realize that we are responsible for all these patients, and that if they were in their own homes they would not barely be allowed in at the front door. They ride in from outlying camps in the heat of the day, and it is very annoying after this effort to be turned away. Mr. D., who was so ill, and is now better, told me that his brother officers said they would rather face shell fire than me! I was glad to hear that. Things are vastly improving, and we are really very happy in our work. It is a pleasure working under Major P. and Captain C. We hear horrible rumours that the hospital from Intombi is



being moved up, and that No. 11 Field Hospital is moving off. We had a sad case of poor Captain G., in the Inniskilling Fusiliers, being brought in with dysentery. He was sent in by wagon about fifteen miles or more, and nearly died on the way, and was in such a collapsed condition when he arrived that he never recovered. We did all we could for him, but he died on the third day. I was so grieved, as I heard he was an only son. As I was sitting up with him one night I saw him smiling, and I asked him why he smiled. He said, "I have just seen my mother sitting in her chair." It was so pathetic. I saw the picture too; but I thought it was a bad sign, and was almost sorry he had said it. He died next day most peacefully. He was always so gentle and considerate, and would say to the doctor each day, "*When* is this good lady going to bed? She has been up all night with me." He passed away like a little child; the most beautiful death I have ever seen. He must have been a really good man. There would be no horror attending death if all died like that.

Yours affectionately,

X.

## LETTER V

GENERAL HOSPITAL,

TIN CAMP, LADYSMITH, *May*, 1900.

DEAR R.,

The 11 Field Hospital has left us, and now we are under the hospital from Intombi, which has been a sorrowful exchange. We nearly cried to see the 11 Field go with our dear Major P. and Captain C., and to see the reinstalment of the R.A.M.C. The hospitals belonging to the Indian contingents certainly do things with far less red tape. There was so much less worry, and we never had any difficulty in procuring anything we wanted if it *was* to be had, owing to the stimulants and medicines being in charge of the assistant-surgeon, who was never off the spot, and was an excellent man in every way. I cannot remember his name, but he was of the greatest assistance, and never failed us once. I never saw him fussed or put out, though he was working hard all day, and had every

one "at" him. He did all the dispensing as well. We liked the Indian natives too, their gentle manners being in favourable contrast to the rough orderlies, doing everything they were told without making difficulties. I never heard an Indian native say that a thing was impossible. He always managed to do it somehow. For instance, we wanted some toast the other day, and remembering there was no coal, I went to countermand the order, and there were two natives stooping over some burnt embers, one fanning to make a glow, and the other holding the bread over it. No orderly would have done this, even if it had occurred to him. We have the Indians for our servants as well, and find them excellent in every way. Sister K. has one especially to fan off the flies at meals. I really admire her ; she belongs to the cork section of humanity, for nothing makes her go under. Where she is unsuccessful, she bobs up in another place as perky and energetic and cheerful as ever. Before the 11 Field moved off, most of the officers were invalided home ; poor Major P. was amongst them, having had fever for some weeks, and entirely broken down with the long strain of the siege. It

## THE 11 FIELD HOSPITAL MOVES OFF 105

was through self-sacrifice, as he would not give in and go to bed. Both he and Captain C. worked like Trojans, and were adored by their patients. Sister W. and I loved them both, and begged Captain C. to take us with them when he left. He said he wished he could, but ladies would be no good in a "field" hospital. The excitement amongst the officers when they heard they were to be sent home was terrific, and I must give you an account of the day, as it was really funny. They had no ambition to come under the new regime any more than our humble selves, and the greatest anxiety took place at temperature time. There were agonizing faces searching ours as we moved the thermometer from their mouths. There were also fewer calls of "Oh! do let me have this, or that." "Isn't it time for my jelly or champagne?" "Why mayn't I have this, Sister? I am sure it won't do me any harm"; and for a few days peace reigned. I was saved the endless ejaculations of "Lie down there, please, Captain So-and-so." "You are not to sit up, Mr. Somebody else." "No, you may not have that," etc. etc. The day they departed was memorable! "What's my temperature, Sister?"

"What's my pulse; is it all right?" they eagerly inquired on that morning, searching my face and breathing deep sighs of relief on hearing they were normal. There were several who ran great risks in being moved, but, on the other hand, none of them were making any progress, and it was therefore thought advisable to run risks and send them down as soon as possible. The camp was in a shockingly insanitary condition, the smells appalling, and the heat overwhelming and exhausting. The "order" had come to say they were all to be at the station at 3.15 p.m., where the ambulance train would be awaiting them. They were like schoolboys, so great was the excitement to get off. We were afraid that by some incautiousness they would do something to prevent their being fit for the journey. Sister Waller and I arranged to see them comfortably in the train, feeling anxious about some of them. There was the inevitable rush at the last moment, in spite of all precautions, so our time was well occupied with admonitions to keep calm and display no heat. But soldier servants rendered this impossible. This is the sort of thing that went on: "Captain D., will you lie down there?"

"Mr. G., you are sitting up again." "You are leaning over the side of your bed too much, Mr. B." (his head and shoulders not even visible from my point of view); "please get back at once." Accomplished after great flourishing of legs and arms and recovering of bedclothes off the floor.

In spite of these efforts on my part, the language as well as the excitement increased during the packing, and many heated instructions went on to their servants, who looked scared and harassed, and were racing like stags through the wards! It at length increased to such a pitch that it was impossible to control it. Violent epithets flew about in the most vigorous manner, the inevitable "damn!" being most in vogue, of course, for it was being bellowed from nearly every bed—(if I were passing, in smothered roars; if passed, in very loud ones). This was accompanied with violent scufflings amongst the orderlies, who occasionally nearly knocked each other down in their attempts to get to and fro, owing to the counter-orders they received from their masters. "Come here, you confounded idiot! No, no, no! Come back, you fool; listen to what I say! Didn't I tell you to get those things of

mine a week ago?" "Where did you put those boots you brought yesterday?" "Oh, you—you—you d——d fool; roll up that! Put those things down, can't you?" "Ugh, ugh, ugh! Here they are, coming for us!" "Oh, hurry up, you block-head!" "I am so sorry, Sister" (as another "D" accompanied this last announcement), as I was passing by, and saw the poor servant meanwhile profusely perspiring into a well-filled portmanteau, utterly confused, muttering, "All right, sir! done it, sir!" and stuffing in things wildly, etc. etc. "You have no idea what a fool of a servant I have got," his venerable master wailed into my ears with flushed face. "I told him to have all my things ready, and sent him into camp days ago, and he has left half my things behind." I felt quite in sympathy with him, but attempted to remind him that his health would suffer if he got so excited, and begged him to lose his things rather than risk a relapse, and threatened to send the orderly out of the ward if he did not cool down. "You are a fat idiot," I heard him finishing up, "and you spend half your time eating and sleeping!" Mr. H. G. and Mr. D., of "The Man-

chesters," greatly to their credit, kept quite calm all this time, and had wisely had their packing done before the eleventh hour, and lay looking on. Of course, soldier servants are awfully stupid, and I had purposely asked the officers (foreseeing all this) that they should have no packing done in the wards, but leave it to their servants. The exemplary Colonel P. maintained what dignity there was left in my ward, and was apparently deaf to all that went on, as he had drily said to me once, "It is no advantage being a colonel here!" General B. likewise set a good example, and lay like a lamb, looking all eyes, much pulled down by his illness, awaiting the dhoolie bearers. Finally, the packing over and the language greatly modified in tone and feeling, they were all eventually lifted into their dhoolies and carried off, much to *our* relief. Occasional shouts still issued from these enclosures to the servants as they were being whisked off, but this time the heated orderlies commanded the situation.

They stood on the steps steaming and mopping their heads, echoing some of the choice language they had just had hurled at them, and by way of making up for lost time, quite regardless of getting



the luggage off, began lighting their pipes. In spite of all these perturbations we could not help seeing the ludicrous side of it all, and laughed very much, as we followed up the procession in our tonga, with a stream of dhoolie bearers running in a long line ahead of us. Captain C. and the P.M.O. were riding, and followed in the rear. The coolies outran the speed of our oxen, and poor Captain C. had to ride back, seeing the luggage was not in sight, to hasten on the orderlies that we had left smoking with such composure. When we got to the station, to our amazement the train was not in, and in the much-heated, dusty, noisy station we saw all our patients, that we had been nursing for weeks with so much care, deposited on the platform, and there left to remain for four solid hours! Poor Captain C. was furious about it, but there was nothing to be done but to be amiable! The officers were all too pleased to be on their way home again to grumble much, and we sent back to the hospital for milk, while the Indian natives, who never say a thing is impossible, cleverly got the station people to make some cocoa for those who were allowed to have it. Colonel P. had consoled himself with a Huntley and Palmer's

almond cake, and was cutting it with a small pen-knife! "Where did you get it from?" I exclaimed in horror. "Oh," he said composedly (he was always composed), "I sent my servant to get something, and he got this. Have some? It looks excellent," he said persuasively! I implored him not to eat it, trembling for the after-effects; but not being in "full possession" of the cake, the only concession he granted me was—not to eat the almonds! I had to be content, and consoled myself by helping him to eat it. We were secretly envying him the cake, not having seen one since we left Maritzburg. He escaped all right, as he kindly wrote me a note when he got to Durban—as much as to say, "Both arrived safely." The supposition is mine. General B. looked on sadly as we demolished the much-relished cake, but he followed my advice, and refrained. General and Mrs. K. came down as the train was coming in, and were rather shocked at seeing them all on the platform *en masse*. It was an unfortunate occurrence, as undoubtedly the train ought to have been waiting for them. We were very sorry to part with them all. In the rush that ensued when the train at last

steamed in, all sentiment, as well as our good intentions to render assistance, were scattered to the winds, and Sister W. and I found ourselves inextricably mixed up and well wedged in amongst the dhoolies, the bearers all pushing and yelling to gain a foremost position for their charges. Our hats, with the innumerable encounters, were nearly knocked off, our feet well trampled on, and our ears deafened with the noise and screams all around. We resigned ourselves to our fate, and were swept along. Finally, we found them all safely tucked up in their berths, and left them in the hands of their new "caretakers," and after many "Good-byes" and hand-shakings, we stepped out on the platform. The end of all things had not arrived. Just as the train was about to move off, Captain D.'s head came plunging out of the window, with frantic shouts and yells and much flourishing of long lean arms. "My pillows," he shouted, "and my quilt!" (He had really given them to me.) "Those confounded natives!" I heard him say, as I ran aimlessly among the dhoolie bearers to find the belongings he had given me in a weak moment. It was too late, however, the train moved off, and the last impression

that view left on me was Captain D.'s long arms floundering outside the window. I mentally congratulated myself that I was not near them, as they bore an angry aspect that would have augured ill for any one within their range. I scored by it, as I took possession of the pillows and quilt, which I found in the ward on my return, and very useful they have been! Only three solitary patients had been left; amongst them poor young Mr. D. and Major J., an R.A.M.C. officer, both of whom have been so terribly ill: it would have been quite out of the question to have moved either. I heard they were to be transferred to another ward, much to my sorrow, as I was naturally interested in them both. My work for the moment being at an end, I asked for leave to proceed to Maritzburg, having three objects in view—one being an entire rest after nearly six months' hard work, the second was to try and see if I could be sent to Pretoria, and the third was to see if Mrs. G. would accompany me. Immediately after her accident she had opened up her house to sick officers, in conjunction with Mrs. Gunnings, and here I found her installed. Her house, although only a small one, was turned to every

possible advantage, she having even converted her drawing-room into a bedroom, so as to have as much accommodation as possible. She never considered her own comfort and convenience. The only person who objected to this was her maid. Her house was full of patients, constantly coming and going. The host had a broken arm, and the hostess was on crutches, but it is impossible not to admire these two, as they are daunted by no obstacles. Mr. G. is splendid. This is the way they are spending the first year of their marriage! They are always doing good, but no one hears anything about it. The officers are most happy, as well they need be. They had an extraordinary case of a young officer who was to have come to their house, but did not turn up. He had escaped from the convoy coming down from Intombi, and caused a great deal of anxiety to the authorities as to what had become of him. After three days he turned up all "staggering and nerve-shattered," and terrified at the mention of hospitals, doctors, and nurses. He had hidden in a barrel in a cart coming down to avoid being sent to hospital, but on hearing Mrs. G.'s house was not one he took refuge with her.

Under her calm and soothing influence, and finding himself being treated once more like a human being instead of as a "case," he gradually recovered, and became, as Mrs. G. said, "quite perky, and just like a jester in Shakespeare." Several had their little peculiarities. For instance, one walked in his sleep, another who could not sleep used to get up and take midnight strolls, and I believe occasionally collided in the hall with the somnambulist at the expense of the household's slumbers. When once they had arrived, the problem was how to get them to go, as they never wanted to. Many a man went to that house a wreck, not caring what became of him, and left it restored. I can quite understand it. Mrs. G. sent them back to their work stimulated and refreshed, from coming under her influence, which is very remarkable. I heard one officer say, that until he had met Mrs. G. he never had much opinion about women, but he would always think more highly of them now, in homage to the absolute goodness he found in her, which was as natural to her as the air she breathed. What cannot a good woman do! Of course, she is really exceptional, as her character is so finely pitched, and

*she is good*, and not trying to be, like so many of us poor mortals.

We talked over the Pretoria scheme, and finally arranged that we would, as soon as circumstances permitted, go round to Bloemfontein, where we heard the enteric was raging. Mrs. G. was still unable to walk without her splint, and I had to feel my way with the P.M.O. as to the possibilities of being sent round; but he proved quite as formidable an obstacle as any splint. I went and faced this lion in his lair. He was sitting in his office in his shirt sleeves (blue ones, I remember), and Major B., v.c., his secretary, sat at another table behind me. No smiles greeted me. "Sit down, won't you?" said the P.M.O. discouragingly. Unabashed, I seated myself and waited for him to give the "send off." "What can I do for you?" he said bluntly. It was an awkward moment, and the question was not in an encouraging tone. He already wanted to get rid of me, I could see. I thought I had better have it out at once, so I said, "I want you to send me to Bloemfontein." He was a huge man, with a huge head, and huge eyes, and a huge voice. "What! what! what! what!" he roared, as if

I were demented. "I want you to send me to Bloemfontein," I repeated, having taken the plunge, and striking out for all I was worth. "Send you to *Bloemfontein*!" he gasped, staring at me. "*What* on earth has put such an idea into your head?"

"I thought you could do it," I said encouragingly, determined not to be overawed by him. "I can't, really," he said, taking up his pen half smiling. "I have no power whatever to do it. Besides, if I had, I shouldn't do it." "Why not?" I said, anxious to get all the information I could (I saw it was not so easy as I thought). "Well, to start with," he began, balancing his pen on his finger, "if I did, I should have all the other Sisters coming to me to send them round, and a *nice* thing that would be! I can't do it," he added, giving me the signal to go; "it is quite *impossible* for you to think you can get round." "If I resign?" I suggested. An unsportsmanlike voice behind (the V.C.'s): "She won't get taken on if she does." "Well, anyway," said the P.M.O. irritably, "it is the only way she can do it."

I was just beginning to feel somewhat non-plussed, but when I heard the P.M.O. say it was "*impossible*," and the opposition of the V.C. be-



hind, this cheered me up, put new life into me, and I mentally determined to make it *possible*. So I jumped up, told him I was very sorry to have troubled him, and agreed to return to Ladysmith, thinking this a wiser thing to do till I had felt my way more thoroughly, as I did not want to find myself stranded by any injudicious move. I really did not see my way at all, but the difficulties and opposition egged me on. Supposing they would not take me on the other side; and how was I to get there? (risking all that). That night as I was in bed, it finally occurred to me that the only way I could do it was to resign, and make myself once more a free agent. The problem solved, I fell asleep. After further discussions with Sister G. it was arranged I was to return to Ladysmith until she was able to do without her splint, and we were then to give up the Natal side, and go round to Bloemfontein. We did not mean to go near Cape Town, as we knew we should never get to Bloemfontein if we did, so we chose East London for preference. Of course, there *was* the *one* difficulty for us both to face—that was, when we got to Bloemfontein, would they take us on? The obstacle, how-

ever, only added zest to our plans, and, well satisfied on the whole, I returned once more to Ladysmith. The alterations were numerous, and we never ceased to mourn the loss of the 11 Field Hospital. The worst time I have had was yet to come.

Sister N., being the superintendent, handed me over the ward I was to have in my charge, and I can truthfully say quite the filthiest I have ever been into. Sister W. gave me a terrible account of hers, and all the others complained of the same things. The ward handed over to my charge staggered me, even after all I have been through. There were three orderlies, so there was no excuse for such dirt. One was an R.A.M.C., another one was from the ranks (the best of the lot), and a third, a Johannesburg refugee, a poor weakling. There were twenty-four beds, which were of course full up. Some of the patients were lying on blankets and some buried under them (the heat appalling!), others on worn-out mackintoshes, and a few boasted of the filthiest sheets you could imagine. They all looked unwashed and wretchedly neglected, and made my heart ache. The floor was a sickening spectacle, the men having

expectorated all over it, and it was not fit to walk on; the bedside tables were caked with spills of milk and beef tea, and the cups on them bore traces of having had both beverages tipped promiscuously into them (that trick I knew of old), and bore no traces of washing. It was not a hopeful situation to face, and I was beginning to feel at the end of my tether. I saw the men I had to deal with by their demeanour, and what I was to expect. They were outside as usual, smoking. I called one in. The R.A.M.C. one came, with a threatening attitude (there were several patients calling out, all but two or three being in the most critical stages of enteric and dysentery, and several quite unconscious). I told him I thought the ward was a disgrace, and wished it cleaned; also it should not be left, and one must always remain in. I learnt from him that the equipment of the ward consisted of one feeding-cup (broken spout), a few cups, no shirts or pyjamas, no sheets, two mackintoshes, and the mattresses in such a condition as to be causing bed sores. The orderly, however, said they were expecting new ones, also sheets and shirts; so, somewhat consoled, I expended my energies on the

patients. I set the orderlies about cleaning the ward. "Don't see much the matter with it myself," said the senior orderly defiantly. On observing that many were calling out for milk, I asked how he gave it. "Give what?" he replied. "Their milk," I repeated, seeing he was feigning stupidity. "Well, I am not quite sure," he said nonchalantly; "some 'as it one time, some another, just when they asks for it." "Not regularly?" I questioned. "Oh, no," he said; "they have it when they asks for it. Some of 'em won't take anything. There's that chap's milk been standing there all the morning." The unfortunate man brought under my notice was quite unconscious, so it might have remained there all day as far as he was concerned. Such is one instance of how the poor patients were faring, and the dire necessity of a nurse.

My efforts to bring order out of this chaos caused mutiny, but I went steadily on. The siege had utterly demoralized them. They got better in time, and then I was moved into another ward, of which more anon.

The diet sheets were a study in themselves. The amount of stimulants the patients were on was

simply amazing, and would have kept a barmaid employed all day. In fact, I became such a "dab" in opening champagne bottles that one of the men thought I had been one! All of them were on two sorts of stimulants, and some three, and lots were undoubtedly on the verge of D.T., trembling like aspen leaves in consequence. The doctor was a civilian, just taken on (an elderly man, suffering from heart disease, and very mild), and he said, "There is nothing else to give them." When the new mattresses at last made their appearance, which happened to be my lunch hour, I told the orderlies not to begin changing them till I came back. Alas! my instructions were ignored, and I returned to find a patient perched on a chair (temperature 104°!), the orderlies sitting on the bed smoking.

"Don't see how you can change a feller's mattress with 'im lying in bed," said my puzzled R.A.M.C. orderly to my indignant expostulation. He, however, said he "didn't want to be shown 'ow," and went off jauntily, with his hands in his pockets, much offended. It ended in my having to do them all myself, as I dared not trust them alone.

Another difficulty is to get the patients washed.

The orderly told me it was not "Army System!" I had great misgivings over it, but it was impossible to do all myself, so I arranged that each orderly should take six patients, and that I should take the worst. Sometimes I dared not look at this process. The poor patient was having tremendous hoists up in the process of his shirt being removed, and emerging, after a heated struggle and many tugs, from the aperture of his shirt quite red and exhausted. A dripping sponge was then sluiced on him, and the orderly would then commence a conversation (mostly grievances) to the next bed, leaving the wretched patient wet till he had finished. It was awful! I asked a patient once if he had had a nice wash. He said humorously, "Yes, Sister, I had a good sluice down!" which just described the process. After I had finished sponging one of the men one day, he said, "That's prime, Sister! I feel washed now." "Don't you always?" I said, very amused. "I should, Sister, if the water were clean." I asked him what he meant. "Well, it is this way, Sister," chimed in a fellow-sufferer, "they won't be bothered to get fresh water each time, so they wash us all in the same water—such a drop too!" he

added with some melancholy over this horrible trick. I asked him why he had not told me before. "Well, Sister" (in an indulgent voice), "it's war time, and it is like this: they don't care, they are 'ardened like." It is really marvellous what they will endure from one another. I felt I could not have followed such forbearance—could you?—but that the contents would have been disposed of on the orderly and not on me!

It took three days alone getting the ward scrubbed, but it was *eventually done*, and I began to feel more pride in it. The Sister Superintendent congratulated me on the marked change, and even the orderlies seemed to feel it, and were much more amenable. The civilian doctor was quite pleased, and said with a twinkle in his eye, "How have you managed it? You have had some hard work, I am sure." I told him my motto was not "Do as little as you can," at which he smiled. It is the R.A.M.C.'s motto, and I am not surprised now. My happiness was short lived. As I was walking across the camp under my gamp one morning, feeling at last in a happier frame of mind, Sister N. came up with one of the new arrivals of nurses from England.

They had been sent up in a batch of about fifty. She told me I was to hand my ward over to the new Sister. I could scarcely believe it, but it was the P.M.O.'s orders, so I had to do it; but I also meant to go and ask the P.M.O. if I might keep my nice clean ward. After I had handed it over, I went and asked him if I might not have it back. "I am afraid not, Sister," he replied. "Why not?" I said. "Because I have arranged it otherwise," he answered vaguely. "I have given you another ward, which I want you to take over." "I can't have my old ward back, then?" I said. "No, Sister; very sorry," he said, looking up at last, "the *fiat* has gone forth, I am afraid."

Unfortunately, mine had too! I resolved then and there not to take over the other ward, and I told him so; also that these constant changes, with the difficulties we had to combat with and the dirtiness of the wards, was breaking us down, and we *all* felt it. "You are not feeling well," he said kindly. "Perfectly," I said serenely. "Well," he said rather wearily, "are you going to take over that ward?" "No," I said firmly. "I can't cope with another. I should prefer to return to Maritz-



burg." I returned to my hut, determined not to give in on this point. It wasn't to get my own way, as I know he thought, but to strive against an absurd and meaningless performance that tended to blunt all interest in one's work and patients, and crush any enthusiasm. I was beginning to see why the orderlies took so little interest in their work. They were always being changed about too. It is very bad for the patients. To do the P.M.O. justice, I don't think he realized what all this meant to us, and how really hard it was to leave a ward just when we had got it clean, and to know all our patients, taking an interest in them individually ; but I suppose he did not see *why* I should make a fuss when the others did not. He had his own worries and difficulties. Sister N. was somewhat taken aback at my insubordination, but she was very good—a little amused too, I think. She advised my giving in, but I maintained my position. After two days she asked me if I would go on night duty, to which I consented, willing to meet matters half-way till I left, knowing I should now soon be departing with Sister G. for the other side. It was not a very nice camp to be on night duty, there were

so many refugees about, rather riff-raff. They had been taken on as orderlies, and were often drunk. My two night companions were most congenial, however. They had both just come out from England, and were horrified at the state of things. I explained it was now in as much working order as it ever would be. One was a most amusing "raconteuse," and when we congregated in our little "bunk" for meals she gave the most entertaining accounts of the encounters she had had with the orderlies on her "rounds." It was most ludicrous, as she repeated them all very gravely, having tried at 1 a.m. to instil ideas of a London hospital discipline and regime, she had just come from, into the sleepy orderly stretched on the floor, who wished her and her theories at the bottom of the sea. Finding one of them always asleep, she awakened him, looking very severe. "Why are you asleep?" Orderly (stumbling up off the floor): "Wasn't asleep, I was only lying down." "But you were asleep," she said. "I had to kick you with my foot to wake you up." "I wasn't," he contradicted. "You are very impertinent," she said, drawing herself up in a very dignified way that

was completely lost on him. "If you are asleep next time I come round I shall have to report you." Of course he was! There were several delirious cases, but that was a detail to the orderly. The wards looked terrible at night, and smelt horribly, with only a flickering candle as a light, and it must have struck these poor girls very forcibly just out of their nice clean hospitals in England; but we managed to remain cheerful. The sister I have been mentioning (with many others) was struck down with dysentery after being only a few days in Ladysmith.

I was glad when the expected wire arrived from Sister G., saying "Hasten your plans." I sent in my resignation at once, which the P.M.O. accepted. I think he was rather glad to get rid of such an element of insubordination, but it was quite nice of him to let me go immediately. Sister W. and I sat up in our much-battered huts the last night, and talked over our experiences. She and Sister N. came to see me off next night. The train was crowded, and the R.S.O. (railway staff officer) ran about trying to find a place for me. I was eventually bundled in (just as the train was moving) with two officers. There was no time for any modest pro-

testations, as I waved my adieux. One side of the carriage was at once given up to me, the second officer occupying the berth above that of his companion; so I settled myself down comfortably, being very tired after night duty, not having slept all that day. My slumbers, as well as those of my companions, were greatly disturbed by the opening and banging of the door at each station to see if there were room; but I had so far kept every one out by saying, "No room; shut that door please!" In the course of events a guard turned up, saying, "You must all make room here, please!" A deathly stillness prevailed. "Make room, please!" repeated the guard. "Shut that door, please!" I mumbled out from under my coverings—Captain D.'s quilt, by the way. "But, madam," he said, coming up to me, "you must make room here." "Please shut the door," I repeated, with closed eyes and wearied voice. My position was greatly strengthened by my two companions' absolute immovableness—they never budged. They evidently trusted to *me* to carry the position. The guard stood waiting. "Very well, I shall have to let the people in, as they have as much right in the train as you have,"

he said at last. "Yes," I said, "but not to make us all uncomfortable." "Come in here, madam," I heard him saying, having given me up as hopeless; "there's plenty of room here." To my horror, a huge figure of enormous bulk blocked up the doorway, and I saw a great fat woman, with five children in single file, being pushed in. She was acting as "heaver" from behind, and did her work well, and I heard her panting. So was I, though from quite another reason—mortal fear! As she got in I heard a sigh and groan from the officers, and saw them in the act of surrendering, one putting his leg down, so I whispered hoarsely (extremely agitated, for it was a critical moment), "Don't move yet for anything! Lie down, please, or you will spoil all!" I was playing my last card. Their soldierly instincts coming to my rescue, they sank back as the five children that had filed in began calling out in loud nasal twangs, "There ain't no room here, ma." "Madam," said the infuriated guard, edging his way in down this lengthy file and attacking me, "you must make room for this lady and her children." "Put 'em in the guard van," I suggested, the idea coming quite spontaneously; "more room there than here." It

was my last card, so I threw it down desperately, otherwise I might not have spoken with such rude heedlessness. It acted, however, like a spell. I was holding my breath with fright, for I heard (eyes still closely sealed) the enraged mother pulling her darlings out one by one, and saying, "They shan't go in there; the very idea—guard van, indeed!" I was sorry to take such violent measures, but, as I told the guard, there was not any object in no one getting rest, and I only hope they succeeded in getting as nice a place as I had. The door closed at last and I fell asleep, hearing the officers chuckling to one another, and saying, "Lovely idea that. Put 'em in the guard van, indeed! Splendid!" We were not attacked again, and I may add I slumbered till the train reached Maritzburg at 3 a.m., when, after trying in vain to get into two hotels, I had to return to the station in my ricksha and sleep the remainder of the night in the waiting-room. So I consider the lady of bulk and I were quits.

Yours affectionately,

X.

P.S.—Sister G. and I are just off to Bloemfontein. I wonder how we shall succeed, and if the authorities will take us on up there?

## LETTER VI

NO. 10 GENERAL HOSPITAL,  
BLOEMFONTEIN, *July*, 1900.

DEAR R.,

In my last letter I think I left myself in the waiting-room at Maritzburg station, unable to find a more respectable lodging. Since then, however, my fortunes have changed, and you will see that Mrs. G. and I have taken a somewhat lengthy leap, and have at last reached the place our compass was pointing to, in spite of the gloomy predictions of my V.C. friend at the P.M.O.'s office. His prophecy that I should not be taken on very nearly came true all the same, as on reaching East London I found it impossible to get up without a pass.

I had, therefore, to be left behind while Mrs. G. proceeded up to Bloemfontein, but after eleven days the pass arrived, which she had with great difficulty persuaded the P.M.O. to send.

I received a lot of kindness at East London, and the staff officer had a reserve carriage put at my disposal the night I left. He had also asked an officer (A.D.C. to Sir F. W.), who was travelling the same way, to keep an eye on me ; so feeling well sheltered, I left East London without one regret, with General Sir F. W. and Sir G. F. and the A.D.C. on the train with me. Sir F. W. and I were not quite strangers, as we had travelled out on the same boat when I came out in 1899. I am afraid I took advantage of this short acquaintanceship, for I was, as usual, invaded in the night by various officials, who informed me I could not possibly keep the carriage to myself, and that they would be obliged to let people in. It was bad enough having to be awakened for one's pass, without those threats accompanying my disturbed slumbers, so at last, in desperation, I sent one of the officials to Sir F. W. to confirm the statement that my carriage was a "reserve" one. It was rather cruel of me, but I was not disturbed again. Next morning, at Queenstown, the kind A.D.C. came along to ask if I could come and breakfast with them, and Sir F. informed me that he had sworn the carriage was a



"reserve" when he had been attacked on the subject in the night, as he thought that was what I would wish, but he didn't know whether it were true.

We arrived at Stormberg at midday. Just as the train had moved off, and I was standing by the window, the R.S.O. rushed up and said I must get out, as I was going the wrong way. We had previously had a conversation on the subject, and it was arranged that I was to go on, so I was somewhat flustered, with the train moving off, to be told I was to get out. I fell headlong into the R.S.O.'s arms, who was standing to receive me, or pick up the remains. But I no sooner found myself standing by his side, than I discovered what a very foolish thing I had done. All my luggage and belongings were in the train that was moving out of the platform. My one idea was to get back at any cost, with my worldly goods, so I made a dash to regain the train. The detaining hand of the R.S.O., however, prevented this. In my excitement I danced up and down nearly in tears, saying, "I must have my luggage; please stop that train!" Seeing my agitation, and I suppose realizing the inconveniences

it would entail, the gallant R.S.O. made a lunge forward, and tore like a stag down the platform (I after him, to let off steam), he waving and shouting to the engine-driver to draw up the train. To my intense relief his efforts were effectual, and I had the satisfaction of seeing it slowly shunting back, much to the surprise of the passengers, who all congregated to the windows and on the platforms of the train to see what was the cause of the delay, Sir F. W., his A.D.C., and Sir G. F. amongst them. The R.S.O. and an orderly, meanwhile, had got into my carriage, and were chucking my things out pell-mell. Rugs, straps, pillows, cups, saucers, plates, etc. followed in quick succession, and I was soon surrounded by my goods.

Triumphantly the R.S.O. stood by my side, somewhat heated by the exertion, and the train was again moving slowly off for the *second* time, when I had another electric shock which I wasted no time in imparting to him, for this time I seized him by the arm and gasped, "My boxes! my boxes!!" in tragic tones. In the hurry and excitement these had been forgotten. My noble friend again, nothing loath, took up my cause with the same gallantry, and

sped full speed down the platform. This time a fat station-master appeared on the scene, furious at the train being stopped, and making cross signals to the engine-driver to go on; but I seized hold of him and pushed him along, saying, "Stop the train! My luggage! my luggage!" which resulted in his enlisting himself in my cause, and he too joined in the hullabaloo, even running down the platform in full cry as fast as his extensive proportions would allow him, with fat, extended arms, and loud roars like an old bull, after my gallant R.S.O. It was a grand sight! Nothing like the sporting instinct! That, and the united efforts of some passengers on the platforms, who also got infected with the luggage cry, and joined in with my two friends, had the result of drawing up the train for the *third* time. At this juncture I was so convulsed with laughter that I stood where I was, with my scattered belongings strewn around me, unable to move. My three protectors of the previous night, who were standing on the train, all bending forward to see how it would end, seemed tremendously amused, and as the train was moving off for the *last* time, the A.D.C. saluted me, saying, not with-

out a tinge of satire, "Good-bye, Miss X., I see you are quite capable of taking care of yourself."

He had previously expressed regret that he would not be able to look after me any more, and I think he thought his concern on my behalf had been somewhat wasted. I had certainly managed to enlist everybody on my side. The poor station-master and the R.S.O. I found simply dripping on the platform, but they said they enjoyed it! Men are so much more gallant abroad than they are at home.

On arriving at Springfontein I was the cause of some curiosity, my carriage being the only one on the train, the rest being trucks. I was informed I had to wait twelve hours to get on to Bloemfontein, and great was my wrath and disgust. The R.S.O., however, wasted no sympathy, and said I ought to think myself lucky to have a reserve carriage, and he did not know how I had managed to keep it, most people arriving in cattle trucks, and I couldn't have it to go on with! I told him I must!

The place looked most uninviting—miles of dusty roads—so I spent the time in my carriage reading. At lunch time the R.S.O. came and asked if I

would come and have lunch with them, and, tired of my solitude, I accepted. It took place in a tin shed, but in these days fastidiousness is unthought of. I had a very pleasant, cheery lunch, though I had qualms that I was probably eating somebody else's "rations." The R.S.O. turned up trumps, as I had a carriage to myself after all. I reached Bloemfontein in three days, in the early morning, and meeting the P.M.O. I was saved the trouble of an office interview. He said, "You have done something out of 'order,' you know, by coming round like this ; but now you are here, I suppose you want to be with your friend?" He then gave me my directions, and wrote on a slip of paper that I was to be taken on at No. 10 Hospital. I found Sister G. sleeping in a little cubicle that you could not swing a cat in, but I was too pleased to have joined her to be critical. She was, as usual, quite oblivious of her surroundings. She had caught a severe chill coming up, but was as keen and undaunted as ever, though very unwell.

I found myself in a nice building—a great contrast to our battered huts in Ladysmith, where I often used to lie in terror in case any one should

walk in, there being certainly nothing to prevent it. We like the Sister Superintendent very much indeed—Sister T. She is an R.A.M.C. Sister, and looks after our welfare well ; and it must be a very difficult and thankless task here at times. She received me so kindly.

This is the boys' college, and all the schoolrooms are of course wards. It stands in the town. It seems very well managed, and really the soldiers are well looked after here. There are plenty of Sisters, so there are no heartrending feelings that the patients are not having proper attention, as was the case in Ladysmith, though, under the circumstances, that was quite unavoidable. Of course, when I left they were in better order, but I shall never forget those first awful weeks, when there were only four of us at the Tin Camp, and the men falling sick by shoals. Nearly all the men here are down with enteric and dysentery, so we have plenty to do.

The Sisters have been succumbing rather alarmingly to enteric, and the authorities have taken the bishop's house for them. (This place boasts of a cathedral.) There was a little difficulty in getting some one to nurse them, but it was immediately

solved by Mrs. G. stepping forward and offering to do it. It was so characteristic of her to step in where there was no honour and glory attached, and to go to those who were lonely, sick, and unfortunate, that I was not surprised. Sister T. was very touched by it. The feeling had been that they had only come out to nurse the soldiers, but directly Sister G. offered, such is the force of example that many more volunteered, and the difficulty was solved. She is really a great example, and greatly beloved by all. It is impossible not to feel her influence, for she not only begins on a high plane, but lives there. I count myself more than fortunate—in fact, privileged to feel that I am with her and possess such a friend. I can assure you it has helped me over many stiles.

Sister T. thinks most *highly* of her. Here she is, living amongst all these nurses, and not one of them feels, because she is not a trained nurse, that she oughtn't to be amongst them. She has such infinite tact, and is perfectly sweet to them all. She goes every day to the bishop's house to nurse the poor unfortunate Sisters, and is just as absorbed in that as she was in nursing the soldiers. They must love having her, and as they get better she

takes them for drives. We often go alone too, but then it is on a different scale. We go with the purpose of exploring. The veldt is really lovely, and most inspiring, and there are some delightful farms round about.

We went to Williams's farm the other day, and found a most charming place. No one was to be seen ; but, undaunted, we roamed about in ecstasies at seeing a garden which was in full bloom, rows of violets buried in their cool leaves, which nearly reduced us to tears, so delicious it was to see them actually growing as they do at home, and glorious roses. One often pictures Africa as a place of dust and tin houses, but these charming oases on this wide, trackless veldt are entirely forgotten and not even referred to. Quite regardless of stealing, we began to pick the flowers freely, and soon had a glorious bunch. How we should have looked had the owner appeared history is unable to relate, owing to the fact that we were not caught. One or two black boys came and stared, but said nothing. After securing the flowers, we continued looking around in the most unscrupulous manner, and when we came upon a little greenhouse attached



to the house, our delight knew no bounds. We plunged our heads neck-deep into an open window, and inhaled the delicious scent of cherry-pie. Unfortunately it was beyond our reach! The joy of all this charming scene was full on us. When we came upon an orange grove and saw the oranges and larches growing, our thieving propensities increased. We were part of it all, and it was all a part of us. We forgot that nothing was ours, and picked away, reaching up amongst the dark cool orange leaves and clutching eagerly at our treasures. Oh, it was delicious! After a little more roaming, we came upon a shed where the boys were milking the cows, and my unscrupulousness having reached its climax, I dispatched a boy to fetch a glass, and drank a delicious glass of warm milk.

We were then reminded it was time to wend our way back, and, scarcely able to tear ourselves away, we got into the trap and left the spot with great reluctance. You can imagine what it was to us, after all the sad scenes we had been witnessing for so many months, to be out in the free open air, and to drink in all this farm scene.

We rode back with the bottom of our carriage

covered with oranges, and with our precious flowers. We passed a pond close to the farm as we drove away, and standing by the edge was a small crane on one leg—such a funny little spectacle amongst so much space. The sun was setting, and the reflections cast on the water were beautiful. The little crane's form was also reflected, and we turned to gaze at this peaceful scene till it was lost to view. It is indelibly imprinted on my mind.

The effect this pure air has on us is indescribable, so extraordinarily inspiring, and we both love it. It quite envelops one. The men liked hearing of our adventures, and getting the fruit and flowers. I must add we returned to this farm another day, and confessed our sins to the owner, who said we did quite right, and we came back more heavily laden than ever with farm products, only not stolen this time.

Another day we went to Steyn's farm, and found Mrs. Steyn, his sister-in-law, and her little girl there. Her little girl came flying in with the Orange Free States colours pinned on her frock, and the mother smiled, and said significantly and with quiet defiance, "You see she is loyal to her colours!"

She was very polite to us, and gave us tea, and spoke nicely of General French, who had put up near her house, and also well of the troops, who had been all around them a short time ago. We always enjoyed driving back in the evening. We had a little difficulty in passing the sentries on some of our expeditions! "Your pass," they would say. "We haven't one," was our reply.

"Then you can't go by," he would say stubbornly.

"But we are Sisters," came the further explanation. "Can't you see?"

Neither of us had on uniform, but such is the force of suggestion, that the poor sentry often thought he "saw," and let us by.

We had a rather more stubborn sentry on one occasion, who would *not* let us proceed, and all our explanations and persuasions proved unavailing, when a brilliant idea struck us. "Is there an officer here?" we said (some tents were close to). "Yes," he said bluntly.

"Well, you go and ask him to come and speak to us; I am sure he will."

"'E's asleep," muttered the sentry, with a wavering tone in his voice. "Oh! that doesn't matter,"



**BLOEMFONTEIN**

Reproduced, by permission, from "A Civilian War Hospital,"

To face p. 144



we said airily ; " go and wake him up—or I will," I said ; making a pretence to get out of the carriage to carry out my threat.

" All right," said the sentry, looking limp from having looked rigid ; " you can go on." It was more than he had dared do, apparently. We gave the driver a swift dig with a " gamp," and our " shay " with the shambling horses drove on.

How we laughed ! Some were possessed with second sight, we thought, or they succumbed to our suggestions. We made ourselves very agreeable, I assure you, and they would say, " All right, Sister, pass on," and took our word that we were Nursing Sisters without a vestige of doubt.

One of our drives, which was rather disastrous, I must just mention in closing. Having heard of Quin's Farm, as too far to go to (fifteen miles), we thereupon determined to do it. It required a great deal of manœuvring, as no driver would have taken us so far in these days ; but after discovering its whereabouts, we got a " shay " with a couple of mules, and told the boy to take us for a drive, indicating the road we wished to go ; and then when we got to the veldt

we kept egging him on and on until we reached the farm, when, to our horror, down flopped both mules. Mrs. Quin came forward to meet us, greeting us most kindly, and invited us to come and sit down on the lawn, and ordered tea. While this was being got ready, Sister G. and I ran up the kopje to get the view, and when we got down Mr. Quin joined us. He came along with his bulldogs, and looked so happy and strong. We are so accustomed to see sick men that it is quite refreshing to come across any one hale and hearty. He showed us over his farm after tea, and took us to see his dam which he was building. We then had to think of returning, and went to see how the mules had fared. They looked quite spry for them, and had had a good feed, so we inspanned and started off. Alas! not to arrive till nearly seven, for they completely collapsed, and presented such a broken-down appearance that we despaired of ever getting back. All our inspirations left us. It was sickening ; for what with our dismay at being on duty over an hour late, and the wretched mules being beaten and made to stagger on, and missing all the enjoyment of the veldt, which is wonderful of an

evening, we were thoroughly downcast. The moon rose as the mules shambled along, with the harness clinking to the ground as they continually fell back on their haunches. Then Venus rose over a kopje in amazing splendour. We felt all the beauty and vastness of this silent veldt, but felt our sense of it quelled as we shrank back at each lash of that ghastly whip on those wretched animals. No one but a Dutch boy could have done it. It was either that or being stranded on the veldt, which of course was impossible, and would have caused great alarm. As it was, they were thinking of sending out a "search party" for us. Poor Sister T. had got quite anxious, but forgave our late arrival under the circumstances. I am relieved to say we saw the boy a few days later, and he said the mules had quite recovered, and was very amused at our concern.

I am sorry to say our drives are now over, for Mr. G. has come down from the front and is taking Mrs. G. back with him to Johannesburg. I am now trying to follow her up. My next letter will reveal my success or non-success.

Yours affectionately,

X.



## LETTER VII

IRISH HOSPITAL,

PRETORIA, *October, 1900.*

DEAR R.,

I take up my pen once more after a long silence. I left Bloemfontein soon after I had applied to be moved on, which was in July. Kind Sister T. also used her influence, and when an order came down from Pretoria to send up the four Canadian Sisters, she put in a word for me. One of them was unfortunately ill, so I was sent in her place. I was sorry in many ways to leave No. 10, especially Sister T., from whom I had received nothing but kindness. Her sense of duty and conscientiousness was beyond praise, for she had a very difficult task. The hospital was split up into several buildings, all of which she had to superintend and keep an eye on. I had my "orders" to proceed to the station in the evening, so after many adieux I left No. 10 Hospital.



THE PALACE OF JUSTICE AT PRETORIA (THE IRISH HOSPITAL)

To face p. 148

3

The train started at 9 p.m., and when I reached the station I found my companions had already arrived, and were walking three abreast down the platform in khaki uniform, with double-breasted brass buttons on bodice and red cockades in white sailor hats. They looked very smart and keen. The train was not in, so, after hanging about, it gradually dawned on us that it might be as well if we walked down the line to see if it were there instead.

We gathered up an orderly on our way, who seemed to think that we were doing the right thing, and also declared he thought he knew the train that was going that night.

After going fairly cautiously down the line, for it was pitch dark, we came upon the train, and climbed up full of enthusiasm. To our utter amazement and chagrin, we found an array of officers with faces of equal dismay surveying the most filthy compartment you can imagine, resembling our third-class at home, with only half-partitions throughout. We all fell back hastily, the Canadians blurting out without the least compunction, "By Jove! this is a nice carriage to give us! I am not going there."

The orderly stood stoutly declaring there was no other train going, and strongly advised us not to go back to the R.S.O., which I was threatening to do. "Surely we aren't going to be flung in with these officers!" I was saying incredulously, and almost simultaneously with an officer who was standing on the step considerably ruffled and shocked, muttering, "We are not going to travel with all these ladies, surely! It is impossible."

It was really a serious matter, as you never knew how long you put yourself in for when you entered a train, and there was always the chance of being held up and disrobed! We had recently heard that some Sisters and officers had had this done to them. Apart from the embarrassment we should all have experienced in such close quarters, it would have been a detail compared to the bitter cold nights we should have had to endure. I was in great sympathy, therefore, with the officer of delicate feelings, and was just making off to the station to carry out my resolve, when a loud whistle rang out, and I heard the Canadians laughing and saying, "By Jove! Get up quick; we are off!" Such proved the case. I had only time to spring up with the

friendly hoist from the orderly, and seizing the outstretched hands of the Canadians, who were tremendously amused (seeing the humour in spite of the irony of the situation), when the train moved off, creaking, shaking, twisting, and jerking till its long-drawn-out line was fairly *en route* for Pretoria.

There we all were, absolute strangers, but flung together for several days for some unknown reason, in as close a proximity as it was possible to be. There was no possibility of lying in the partition allotted to us, except one at a time (as the corridor passage took up the room), and then only if we could place our feet on the other party's lap. But not knowing each other very well, we did not see our way to this the first night.

"You are better off than we are," some of the officers exclaimed, who had come to inspect our portion. "We haven't a seat." This proved only too true during the night.

The Canadians had brought a big hamper, but had scanty wraps, and eyed Captain D.'s "Red Quilt of Ladysmith" with envy. It got so much admiration that, as the cold increased during the night and I heard shivers, in a weak moment I

shared it. The consequence was, no one was warm for the rest of the night, and we spent most of our waking moments tugging it away from each other, accompanied with a good deal of spite and irritability.

It was principally a series of tossings and turnings, many and frequent hoistings, interluded with varying snores, ranging from a pig's to a pug's.

"By Jove! this seat is hard!" gasped one of the Canadians during a lull in the dead of night, which made everybody laugh, as it came out spontaneously, although we were likewise sufferers.

The train had no compunction in jerking several luxurious sleepers, who were fortunate enough to have seats, on to the floor or, I should say, on to a less fortunate individual, who had to be content with the ground-floor; and then the row and scuffling were terrific, and there was no sleep for any one till the parties were reconciled, and the culprit's and victim's voices had again died down from the wildest ejaculations: "You did!" "I didn't! It was the train. It wasn't my fault; I didn't know I was asleep!" "Well, just look out for the future!" came the final reply, with more

injury than logic. There was no redress to be got from the train, but it seemed hard lines, when your fate was the ground-floor of a filthy train, to have the roof above, in the shape of a human being, descending heavily and unexpectedly, without respect of position, on your body, when you happened to fall into a harmless sleep. It was most trying to the temper. I felt for the ground-floor inhabitants, but my fate was less hard. As I sat up in my corner, my shoulders collided over the partition with Sir H. E., but neither of us fought or resented it. We accepted the inevitable.

At sunrise, after a night of innumerable disturbances—too many to go on relating—Sir H. staggered up and announced he was going to make some cocoa, offering me some. He surveyed the ground-floor with some disgust, for the occupiers were now nearly all snoring uproariously and sleeping profoundly in consequence of their disturbed night.

The train went slowly along, winding in and out of a zigzag course, the veldt showing a dark outline against the deep red sky, proclaiming daylight. But Sir H. saw no charm, and said he thought the country "damnable!" "What charm is there in



this?" he said, pointing a contemptuous finger to the scene outside. I felt considerably better after my hot cocoa, so I did not curse like the colonel. I gave him a bar of chocolate in exchange for the cocoa, which he took and ate, and we talked away till we reached a station. The different expressions as they all awakened at K. were most entertaining, their faces shining like dirty glasses, owing to their being smothered in dust, for you can't imagine what it is on a train out here. As there was no place to wash on the train, quite a stampede occurred when we all thought there were chances of ablutions on reaching the station. We all more or less looked a different colour on our return to the cattle-truck, and eyed each other with some interest. We had eaten a good breakfast, and felt more human. I helped the Canadians demolish their hamper at lunch-time, for they were most generous, and were excellent girls to travel with, and I thoroughly enjoyed their society. We were all most cheery, and I may say, even happy; nevertheless, after nearly three days, we weren't sorry to leave the old cattle-truck.

On arriving at Pretoria, midday, we drove at

once to the P.M.O.'s office. He told us he did not quite know where to put us, so sent us to one of the hotels to await our "orders." I promptly put in for "leave" to proceed to Johannesburg, thinking this an excellent opportunity of seeing Sister G. before I began my duties. I got there next day, much to her amusement. She and Mr. G. had opened up their house as a convalescent home, and many sick officers were benefiting by it. I spent three happy days with them, having glorious rides and drives with them on the veldt. Mr. G. had a very nice piece of ground, which he was laying out, and the views from there were perfectly magnificent. This country is a great eye-opener!

On my return to Pretoria, having outstayed my "leave," I found all the Canadians flown, and an order from the P.M.O. telling me to proceed to the Palace of Justice. I was much impressed with the building, which I found a really very fine one, standing in the Market Square, and as I entered the hall I was still more impressed! It was entirely filled with beds, which were all covered with red blankets, and the patients in their red bed-jackets to match gave a most cheery aspect. The pillars all

down the hall lent an imposing appearance to the scene, whilst the Sisters in their white flowing caps and little red capes added to the picturesqueness, and gave the finishing touch to the whole. Every one looked bright and happy. Lots of the patients were sitting up in their beds, and animated conversations were taking place. On proceeding upstairs, I met a bevy of nurses going to their tea, and amongst them my Canadian friends, who all looked beaming, and without any explanation, directly they saw me, burst into loud and prolonged laughter. All I could get out of them was, "Of all the coolest beggars, you beat any we have seen." "By Jove! hasn't she cheek!" I gathered it was because I hadn't turned up to time, and had already overstayed my leave by some hours, which I explained was the fault of the train, that amused them still more. I was eventually carried off by the Irish Sister, who was the only nurse that had come out with the matron of the Irish Hospital, and she offered to show me my room. After toiling up innumerable stairs and going down a long passage, she showed me into a largish room which, to my amazement, was blocked up with six beds, in one of

which lay a sick nurse. Not a peg or a chest of drawers to be seen, and only a lot of boxes strewed about the floor and under the beds. This was more than I bargained for with my sumptuous surroundings. It was as bad as the train, the only difference being that it was temporary, and this arrangement was permanent. I saw a respectable building, and I expected, anyway, respectable accommodation. I therefore turned to the Irish Sister, and said, "I couldn't sleep here." But she said, "You will have to; every one else does." "But it isn't even healthy," I continued; "that Sister over there looks as if she has enteric." "Oh!" she said scornfully, "this is war-time, and we have to make the best of things. But perhaps you had better see the matron."

I could see she was disgusted, and thought I had only just come out, and was not prepared to rough it. We went downstairs in dead silence. We met the matron in the big hall, and when I said I couldn't sleep in the room I had seen, she drew herself up haughtily, saying, "Well, you won't get anything else. If you are not satisfied, you had better go to the P.M.O. I have no other room to give you; no one else had complained." "More's the

pity," I thought, but I gladly availed myself of her proposal, and drove off to his office. In spite of this little hitch, I felt I should like the matron ; she looked so nice and capable. I knew the bad bedroom accommodation was not her fault, as she had to put up the Sisters that were sent to her.

I met one of the Canadians as I was going out, and I told her my errand, and she went off into such uncontrollable laughter, saying, " Well, your cheek ! And after outstaying your 'leave' too ! How you dare ! You'll be 'stellenbosched !' " \*

When I got to the office and told the P.M.O. about our sleeping accommodation, before he replied he looked at me very seriously, and told me I had outstayed my "leave," adding, "There is only one penalty for that, you know." Not seeing he was joking, and feeling rather alarmed, I said, "What's that !" with great bravado, at which he and another officer burst out laughing. He was most obliged to me for informing him about our accommodation, and gave me permission to sleep at the hotel until he had made some other arrangements. He said we were overcrowded there, and he was going to draft several of the Sisters away. He tried to

\* Sent down.

## BETTER SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION 159

get me, in the meantime, to put up with it, but I remained obdurate on that point, knowing full well that if I did I should not have gained my point.

Next morning, when I went over to breakfast, I met the matron, who looked at me rather coldly, but quite kindly, saying briskly, "Well, Sister, what did the P.M.O. say?" I told her he was going to draft some of the Sisters away and leave more room, and that I was sleeping at the hotel till then. I must add she is a most excellent matron, and I have the greatest admiration for her. From that day to this I have received nothing but kindness at her hands. Also, the little Irish Sister and I are quite friends, for she has not only gained considerably over the bedroom episode, but, curiously enough, shares my room.

I am much interested in the work, and love my wards. We get all the flowers we can, and it makes them look bright. The men are really in clover here. What I like about it is that we keep to our own wards, and do not keep chopping and changing about, which you will remember was so distracting at Ladysmith. Matron has great authority here, and this hospital is really very well run and splen-

didly organized, *the result of its being under the sole direction of the matron.* There are no tiresome sergeant-majors and ward masters, hedged round with red tape, to contend with, and though it is partly under the supervision of the R.A.M.C., the Irish Hospital has a fairly free hand. We send down our own diet sheets, so there is none of the endless marking up of "boards" every day by the doctor, as there was in Natal. I was handed over four wards, about twenty-four beds in all, and they are all well kept and beautifully clean. The permission of the doctor hasn't to be obtained to get the wards scrubbed, which was so ridiculous. About forty to fifty black boys are employed, with a Dutchman to keep them in order. He goes about with a sjambok, that has a most salutary influence on them. I recall the trouble we had at Ladysmith to get only one tin hut scrubbed. This huge building is scoured from top to toe every other day by these boys. It is so nice not having anything to do with the natives, and I am sure the less white women have to do with them the better. The orderlies, of course, score by this, and have very little to do. They haven't the cups and "feeders" to wash, as

the boys come round with buckets and remove them after each meal, but they still do the dusting, and that in a very perfunctory manner, sometimes not at all, unless there is some one of importance coming round. The other day, just as I wanted the orderly to be doing something else, I saw him vigorously dusting. There was a good deal more panting about it than anything else, but they all puff and pant if they are doing anything, especially if they dislike it. "Why are you dusting now?" I asked (12 p.m.). "Oh!" he called out, shaking the duster with some vigour over a poor patient's head, "Lord Roberts is comin' round, Sister." "Well, you can put that duster away," I said, "because if the ward is clean enough for me, it is clean enough for Lord Roberts." He was somewhat flabbergasted, but I don't think the gentleman saw my point. "'E'll get into trouble, Sister, if it ain't done," murmured a tender-hearted patient. But Mr. Orderly, only too relieved to feel I had taken the responsibility off him, began airily tossing his duster up and down like a ball, saying jauntily, "Oh, well, I don't care; it ain't anything to do with me; it will be the fault of the Sister!"



and out he and the duster sped through the door. I find the men are excellent patients to my face, but alas! not so excellent when my back is turned. No wonder they get these awful relapses. I was taking great trouble with one man—a case in point, though by no means a solitary one—whose temperature remained at 104° and 105°, sometimes sponging him four times a day. I was really doing it under great pressure, as it happened to be a busy time; but he was a married man and had a wife and children, so I often expended a little more trouble over him. He was a superior man, and very grateful for all that was done for him. On my way to lunch one day, I returned unexpectedly to the ward, and, to my horror, there was my 105° temperature patient sitting most contentedly on another bed, smoking and chatting gaily. We both stared mutely at each other. I don't know who was the most flabbergasted, but without either of us saying a word beyond my exclamation of "Oh!" he crept back to his bed—a tall, lank, lean figure, about six feet two inches, a guardsman—and I went out of the ward. It reminded me of an incident I once heard, of a hunter and a tiger who came face to face in a

jungle, and, after staring at each other for some time, they both backed away without an attack of any sort. He was so penitent on my return that I forgave him, explaining the dangers he incurred, and how unjust it was towards his wife and children. He listened most politely, even deferentially, and seemed really impressed; but after I had caught him at it again twice, I saw the futility of trying reasonable methods, so I left him to his own devices. He got all right, nevertheless. He was not nearly as stupid as most of them, so I felt rather hurt at his behaviour. This touched him considerably. When he was leaving he came back twice to shake hands with me, with a most pathetic expression on his face. I knew he was sorry to have appeared ungrateful, and that this was his way of confessing it. I quite understood, but I had also grasped that it was impossible to get at these men or to make them realize the dangers they incurred by playing such pranks. I should say they are anything but pleasant comrades to each other, for many are the complaints I get over their stealing each other's things. It is beyond my power of comprehension. Those who are leaving think nothing of putting a

sponge in the place of a man's loaf and going off with it, although they are fully aware it is the man's "rations" for the day, and he will get no other. Oh dear! the more I see of men, the more pleased am I that I am not one! I used to think they had a so much better time than women, but I am not so sure now. Nearly every man who has left these wards has come to me and said, "Sister, my coat is gone!" or else it was his little knick-knacks, things of no earthly value to the thief. It was very annoying when they were going down in the train on their way home, and would probably have to travel in cattle-trucks with no thick coats. It is futile to try and discover the culprit. Their esprit de corps is so great in this respect that the transgressor is never betrayed. I was very wrathful on one occasion, when I had poured out the men's wines who were just off home, so that they should have it before they went. As they had gone to fetch their things, I left it on the table, but they only found empty glasses. It had gone down other channels by the time they returned, and I had other things to do than to stand by and watch it. The more you try to find out, the blanker their

faces become. They lie in their beds looking inquiring innocence itself, saying, "It wasn't me, Sister." Even the honest ones submit to this thieving tyranny. However, there are others than soldiers who steal, for on board ship it is perfectly awful. Emerson says, "When you come to absolutes, who isn't a thief?" So, after all, soldiers aren't the only thieves, and, according to Emerson, thieving is fairly universal.

An account of our "messaging arrangement" may amuse you. This takes place in a large room, with three long tables, where the whole staff feed, consisting of Sir W. T., matron, doctors, dressers, parsons, and Sisters, and any stray officers. Two of the chaplains—one fat and jovial, the other thin and timid—go under the name of B. (let us say); one we call the Hopeful B., and the other the Hopeless B., which explains itself as I go along. The Hopeful one hates Rhodes, or pretends to, and abuses him up and down dale. Heated debates therefore take place between us, because, of course, I stand up for Rhodes. It helps the time to pass. I tell him little minds can't judge big ones! I sit next to one of my dear little Canadians, who makes

flank movements occasionally and comes to "relieve me," and between us we hold our position. The Hopeful B. is very intelligent, and somewhat in contrast to his namesake, the Hopeless B. The Sisters complain bitterly of his lamentable greediness, in addition to muteness, and say they can never get a thing to eat when they sit next to him, nor a word out of him. "He even grabs," an especially irate Sister said to me; "and to look at him you would never think he ate a thing." I couldn't help laughing, though I refused all offers to change places and see what he was like. He always walked about with his head on one side. My turn was to come, only in another and more terrible direction, which I will relate in passing. I was surrounded by several of the Sisters and dressers one day after lunch, all saying, "He is going to ask you to go riding with him!" and my Canadian friends, in fits of laughter, saying, "Oh, X., it will be too funny! But don't you go, as he can't ride a bit, and he has been trying it on everybody." I was, therefore, somewhat prepared when he came up timidly a few minutes later, saying, "I hear you ride, Sister?" Though he was timid, he wasn't

sensitive, and wasted no time in coming to his point. After some wavering on my side, I finally consented to go riding one day with him, when he had secured a horse, which was a difficulty, as nobody would lend him one.

The word evidently went round the hospital, as when the event did take place we had quite a large audience. The patients flocked on the balconies and the staff on the front doorstep, thereby deriving the hugest merriment over the spectacle that followed, for which, let me say in defence, I wasn't in the least prepared.

I must also confess to experiencing some considerable chagrin when I saw the "mount" he had somehow secured. He was no judge of horse-flesh any more than he was of man, and his whole attention was concentrated on the question of the quietness of the horse, so I wasn't surprised at his indifference to its appearance. I was able, therefore, to assure him he would have no trouble with his beast, judging from that. I did not dream of the forces within. I never saw such a dilapidated-looking beast in my life. He looked worn and dejected. His back resembled those quilts made

up with patches, so completely was he covered by old healed-up sores, and his coat, where there was any, was tufted like the veldt in the dry season. His head hung as if it were suspended from a wire on a hook (like those toy horses for children that only wobble when moved). He displayed no interest whatever in the world around him, not even when Hopeless B. first advanced to mount him; but, of course, that was where he was so deceptive. The mounting performance of Hopeless B. did neither of us credit. It really ended in climbing. First of all he put the wrong foot in the stirrup; then his hat fell off; then he dropped his whip, followed soon after by his gloves, which had to be picked up. However, at last he scrambled on—as one did on a donkey when a kid—and balanced himself with some triumph, just as if he were prepared for bolster-fighting from off a pole on board ship. You know! He was obviously confusing that performance with riding, and sat with fixed head, scurriedly gathering up the reins as if afraid to move. The difficulties were by no means over after this feat. Nothing on earth would make the brute on which he was perched budge. The

animal merely made the most horrible and unexpected faces, wagging his head, opening his mouth, and displaying big yellow teeth. The situation was ludicrous, but I kept encouraging Hopeless B. to lay on the whip, saying seriously to my brilliant pupil, "You really *must* make him go! Beat him harder! Don't let him conquer you! He really doesn't feel those flicks you are giving him. Don't pull on the curb like that!" This only added to the confusion. He got the reins hopelessly entangled, not having an idea which was the snaffle or which the curb. Eventually my patience coming to an end, I said I would have a try; so telling my pupil to sit tight, I rode up to the beast and smote him with some vigour on the back with my whip, with the result that he nearly unseated Hopeless B., frightening me to death. But at last he clattered off with a stiff-kneed gait towards the town, I in the rear, hearing shouts of laughter from everybody. "Go it, Parson! Pip! pip!" etc. from the men, as if we were in a sack race. My feelings of relief were scarcely realized when I discovered Hopeless B. was unable to cope with the new forms of stubbornness which this awful-looking



brute began to display, to my amazement and his misery. The rider no sooner got him into the main street than the beast drew up with a jerk, turned round and round in the road, walked on the pavements, again contorting his features and displaying his gums in the most horrible manner. It was really brutal of him. Nothing would stop him, either. In fact, he did as he chose in every respect. When he started to walk, it was merely wandering as if he were seeking his fodder, with his head nearly touching the ground. This complicated matters, as Hopeless B. had nearly to lie on the horse's neck to keep hold of the reins; consequently, you can imagine how the two looked, and I was not sorry when the ride was over. On our return there was a considerable rally on both sides. The rider got hopeful, but the horse got still more hopeless, and alas! not anticipating the length he would go to, I was quite taken aback when suddenly he perked up his head, got the bit well in his teeth, and made off for the hospital as hard as he could clatter, arriving there with Hopeless B. in a prostrate condition, *clinging to his neck*, immersed in thick clouds of dust. The dangling reins impeded

a further disaster, and thus ended my first and last ride with Hopeless B.! I never ceased being chaffed about this, but I bore it with fortitude as the "fortune of war."

Amongst other luxuries, there is a Cape cart with a nice pair of grey horses which is at the disposal of the Sisters, and we use it in turns. Four of us went one afternoon to Irene, to Mr. Vanderville's place, about fifteen miles from here. It was, as usual, the most perfect day.

John, the Cape boy, very much disliked my driving, but as I had had permission to do so, I never let him take the reins. One day I was walking the horses up a hill, which was what he disapproved of, when suddenly he made a whistle the horses knew. This, of course, made them bound forward, and John made a spring to seize the reins, but I forestalled him, and told him not to interfere, and that two could not drive.

When we reached Irene, after a most glorious drive, we came upon a camp with all the men looking bored to death, and lying about in what little shade they could find, with all the old familiar tins lying about in heaps. The ground looked like

a rubbish heap, without a vestige of green, and they rather stared at us and our nice smart cart. We felt so sorry for them. A little beyond this we came upon Mr. Vanderbilt's place, which took us completely by storm. We were quite unprepared for the sight that awaited us. I have never seen anything so lovely. We found ourselves in a most beautiful grove, with running water, and carpeted with violets. They were up to our knees in height. We were speechless with delight. As they waved in the sunshine I thought I had never seen such a sight. It quite took our breath away. It was a scheme of mauve. The woman who was in charge, and with whom we had had tea, gave us permission to pick as much as we liked, with the result that we each came back with an enormous bouquet. I really can't give you a conception of how beautiful it was to see these violets growing in such profusion and height in the shady grove amongst their green leaves, with the sound of running water, and the sunlight playing on them through the trees. It was so delicious that I lay down amongst them, and forgot war and old associations, and only felt at peace with my surroundings. It was one of the

moments when you feel you belong to the universe, and not to any particular spot or person on it. My reveries were at last disturbed by the others running up and saying it was very late, and we should have to tear back to be in time to go on duty. They were all as overcome as I was. We had forgotten the time, and were somewhat aghast to find it was 5.30, and that we could not possibly get back at six, in spite of good horses. The violets, however, were so beautiful that we felt they were well worth risking a sharp reprimand from the matron, which we got all right. We drove off with the spirit of the violet grove upon us. The veldt was quite glorious, as the sun was setting behind a kopje in blazing gold, while the moon rose serenely in the east, over the shoulders of another range of hills. There wasn't a sound, except the even paces of the horses as they went along. We were passing down a valley hemmed in on either side with hills and kopjes, swathed in deep shades of mauve, magentas, and gold, changing every minute, and blending silently one into the other. What greater joy than this, to feel the infinite, and to be carried away by it! I believe the most unimpressionable

person would be moved by these South African sunsets, and feel their infiniteness.

On arriving back we tried to sneak upstairs to avoid the matron, but unsuccessfully. She met us with a formidable look, and we had a bad five minutes; but even that didn't sink in. She would listen to no excuses, though I tried the softening effect of the violets, by plunging them under her nose. She, of course, had not been with us and seen what we had. She was perfectly right to come down on us for being late. I took a big bunch of violets and put them in her place on the dinner-table, and she looked over at me and smiled. So in the end the violets conquered!

Another day we wanted to go for a drive. On this occasion we hired a cart to take us, because I was debarred from using the hospital one, owing to John having complained to his master that I had been "rude" to him, if you please, over the Irene drive. I discovered it in this wise. We had wanted him a little earlier one day, so, seeing him in the streets driving, I stopped the cart and told him what time to be at the hospital next day. To my disgust, he first of all *spat* on the ground, then,

scratching his skull, he said most impertinently, "I'll see!" The friend who was with me nearly knocked him off his seat, but I said I would complain to his master, which I accordingly did. Imagine my utter amazement when he looked at me and said, "John is offended with you, Sister, because you were rude to him the other day; but I dare say he will let you have the cart if you apologize to him!"

It was my first experience with an Exeter Hall-ite, and I confess to staring at him open-mouthed and feeling disgusted; but I afterwards learnt that the gentleman in question was always ruled by his servants, and they did as they liked with him, irrespective of their colour. Of course, *here* was the *cause* of John's impertinence. Needless to say, I refused to offer him my apologies. It was some time before I could grasp the fact that a white man could so far forget the traditions of his race as to let one of an inferior race, a mere savage, insult a white woman unreprieved. I spoke to several men about it, and they were all equally disgusted. He preferred to take John's word to mine, for I think John had told him the horses had bolted, and that he

had saved us all from nearly being upset. That was the end of my acquaintance with his master. This is quite an isolated case, let me add, as Exeter Hall-ites are not usually bred in this country. Darwin says "rarity precedes extinction," so let us hope that this species, or "group of species," may become extinct by its rarity! The natives are getting perfectly ruined as it is, by the high wages that are being paid them by the Government. They are very much "out of hand." Even the drivers in the street refuse to drive us unless we consent to pay double fare. Directly they see an officer or a Sister coming, they gather up their reins and crack their whips and off they dash, simply because they know they only get their proper fare, and no more. To forestall this, I thought it better to order a cart beforehand on this occasion, so I strolled out about noon, and seeing one standing near the hospital, I told the boy to come for us at three o'clock. "Me not come, missie," he replied stolidly. "Why not?" I asked. "Me engaged," he said evasively. "Who to?" I questioned, feeling he was merely hoaxing me to get out of coming. "Boss, la pa side," he replied,



EMBARLING FOR HOME. THE LAST TO GO IN  
Reproduced from Dr. Fremantle's "A Doctor in Khaki"

To face p. 176





dubiously pointing with his whip. I then pretended I wished him to take me to the boss, which he refused to do. Then, laughing, he said, "How much money, missie, if me come?" "Your fare, you skellum!" I said firmly. "Then me not come, missie," he said placidly, putting on his cap and tilting it over his nose, and leaning back as if the indaba were over. It was lunch time, and no one was about, but luckily I spotted a solitary officer crossing the market square, so, determined not to be done by this wretched boy, I said, "Do you see that boss?" "Ya, missie," he replied with a start. "Are you coming now?" I questioned threateningly. "Ya, missie; I come at three o'clock," he said, promptly sitting up and looking alert. I had no faith in his promises, however, so as the officer was passing I asked him if he would speak to the boy and make him come, which he very kindly did, with the result that the cart arrived punctually to the very minute, and we drove out to where we wanted. On giving him his fare, he made the most terrific fuss, that General B. P. settled by telling the boy to go to the police-station, and they would give him his fare! The

effect was instantaneous, and we never heard another word.

We are very lucky in getting the band here : it comes very often and plays to the patients. The annexation of the Transvaal took place the other day. It was most thrilling, and I witnessed the ceremony in the square. Lord Roberts gave away the V.C.'s. As he pinned them on, I think we all thought of his son, who might have been having his pinned on by his father, and it added a vein of melancholy.

When the troops had formed up, the flag was unfurled and the band struck up, and I am sure no one remained unmoved. I felt thrilled through and through. Sister G. had come over from Johannesburg to see it, and we had excellent places on the balcony of the Grand Hotel. Then there was the march past, which was a great display, and to my uninitiated eye was very well done. There were loud and prolonged cheerings. The Boers had congregated in great numbers, and saw the whole thing. I should have liked to have read their thoughts. It is the women, however, who harbour the bitterest thoughts, and who give way to the most vindictive feelings. To give you an instance

of this, I was walking along the edge of a mealie plot one day to get down to the river's edge, when a Boer woman rushed after me, gesticulating and screaming as hard as she could, and although I did not understand a word she said, I gathered I was trespassing, so I hurried on—turning back being against my principles—till I got to the water's edge. But she was not satisfied, and tried to get me to come back the same way as I came. Not having the slightest intention of doing this, I settled the difficulty by taking off my shoes and stockings, very slowly and deliberately crossing to the opposite side, where I sat down to enjoy the shade, as it was very hot, thinking I was anyway safe. This nonplussed her for a bit, but feeling she was "done," she put her children on to chuck mud and stones at me behind some bushes. You see they begin their tactics of "trenches" even in the nursery: I only caught sight of my small adversaries at intervals, when they bobbed a head up behind the bushes to see how I was taking it, but I sat it out all right.

The women look as if they had never been loved in their lives, poor beggars, and it is somewhat of

a shock to see these hard, brown, lonely, melancholy, bony faces emerging out of big black sun-bonnets, when you expect to see a bright, pretty face. It is partly due to their rough lives, and more largely still to what Matthew Arnold would call their "defective form of religion."

We had a grand sermon from Knox Little a few Sundays ago. It was so impressive, that the soldiers sat still for nearly three-quarters of an hour without a sound—an unprecedented occurrence, I should say. They won't stand more than ten minutes generally. However, when Canon Knox Little got up in the pulpit, what with his calm, peaceful face and snow-white hair, he evidently impressed them, for they settled themselves to listen. He took the text of, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." Lord and Lady Roberts were there with their daughters, and I think they were greatly moved, for he spoke so finely of those who had lost their lives, and of the grand hope of once more meeting them. I am sure every one in that church was thinking of their irreparable loss. So great is sympathy, that it is like charity—it feeleth all things!

Canon Knox Little carried us all away with him, and when I walked out with Colonel E., with whom I had gone, he exclaimed, "Well, if we are not better for that, we ought to be shot!" He had certainly displayed, with no small force, what beauty and power exist in the Intellect and Soul—its strength and grandeur over all else.

The Irish Hospital is being closed down, and I have been put "in orders" to proceed to Lydenburg with three others. I have, however, decided to come home instead, as I think the rest is essential. The R.A.M.C. refused to pay my passage home. Their argument was they didn't bring me out, but my argument is that it is all the more reason why they should, since they were spared that expense. The R.A.M.C. doctor in this hospital maintained I should not get it, but I took the opposite pole of thought and said I should. I went straight to head-quarters, and succeeded in getting a letter from the P.M.O., with instructions to the people down at Cape Town to put me on a transport home. Had I not done this, I should have been asked who I was on arriving at the base, and should never have got back, except at my own expense or after

endless trouble. I go on the train to-night, and will wait to finish this when I reach Cape Town.

*A week later.*

NO. 1 HOSPITAL, WYNBERG.

We had a most interesting journey, and took a week getting down, owing to the line being blown up. We had two cattle-trucks full of the worst rebels (Cape ones), and I suppose their friends wanted to rescue them. Colonel B. was on the train. He told me he was rather anxious the night the line was blown up. We heard the explosion which took place about ten o'clock, I think, or later; anyway, we were all in bed. I got up immediately and went out. Some patrols were going off to inspect the line, so I had a talk with them. I wished I could have gone off with them. I was quite seized with the desire to go and help chase the enemy. The night was dark, but so still, and I really felt for the moment the intense fascination it must be to hunt man. Please allow for the spirit of the veldt and times and overlook this blood-thirstiness on my part.

I felt quite sorry I was on my way home to quiet, conventional, narrow little England! As George Eliot remarks: "There is a good deal of unmapped country within us that has to be taken into account in extenuation of our gusts and storms!" This country gives out so much vastness and space. We did not start off again for another twenty-four hours, as the line had to be repaired next day. I went and spoke to the Boer prisoners in the morning, as we steamed back into the station. There was quite a young boy amongst them looking through the bars, and I heard Colonel B. say to the sergeant that they must have food, as they had had none for twelve hours, or something like that. "You are much too young to fight," I said to the boy, at which they all immediately brightened up, saying, "Oh, he likes it!" I thought it very sporting of them, considering how huddled up they all were, and that they were being sent out of their country. I saw the boy looking hungrily at a small stall which happened to have dates on it, so I got him some, just as the sergeant walked up and said Colonel B. did not wish me to speak to them. They all beamed on me after I had given the boy



the dates, poor little beggar. We arrived down without further mishaps, and went up to No. 1 Hospital, Wynberg. I had come down with two or three "stellenbosched" Sisters, so got a cold reception, as the superintending Sister thought I was one too! Not happening to be one, I informed her of her error, and she was then very nice, but said so many of them were planted on her and kept there indefinitely that it made her very angry.

On showing my letter from the P.M.O. stating I was leaving at my own request for home, she was quite mollified. I went next day to the P.M.O.'s office, but they said I couldn't possibly be sent home, and hummed and hawed over my identity, only what I foresaw. I then produced the credential, at which they immediately sat up, but still said I should have to wait till after Christmas.

I heard there was a sick transport going within a week: the information was given to me as a friendly tip, and I was not slow to act upon it.

I remembered Sir F. W.'s kindly words in offering to assist me whenever he could, so I wrote to him. The next thing I heard was that the

02



